
Education and Schools News

P R E S S R E L E A S E :

Back-to-Back Gates Millennium Scholars

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LAKE CITY, S.C., April 20, 2016 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) -- Mychal Wynn, author, consultant, college planning expert, and Founder/CEO of the Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity, a Marietta, Georgia-based nonprofit assisting students from underserved and underrepresented communities with college and financial aid planning announced that Lake City High School senior, Rebeca Pacheco, has been selected as the school's second Gates Millennium in as many years. The Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity has partnered with the Florence County School District Three (SC) to assist rising high school seniors, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college, with navigating the college admissions and financial aid planning processes.



Rebeca was a participant in the 2016 Florence County School District 3 College Planning Cohort, yet her journey into being selected as a Gates Millennium Scholar began long ago. Growing up in a non-English speaking household, Rebeca entered elementary school as a non-English speaker. However, by the end of elementary school, not only had Rebeca achieved fluency in both Spanish and English, she was serving as a translator for other Spanish-speaking families registering their children for school.

Mychal Wynn, author of "Show Me the Money: Scholarships, Financial Aid, and Making the Right College Choice," and his wife, Nina, used their curriculum to guide Rebeca, and 50 other rising Lake City High School seniors, through researching colleges, identifying scholarships, writing essays, establishing senior-year goals, and developing academic resumes. After reviewing Rebeca's resume, the Wynns told Rebeca that they believed her to be a strong candidate for the Gates Millennium Scholars Program. Rebeca was not only academically competitive, ranked in the top 5 percent of her class, and taking dual enrollment classes for college credit, but had strong leadership and community service. Rebeca is the captain of the Lake City High School Varsity Girls Soccer Team, participates in the National Beta Club and National Honor Society, and volunteers hundreds of hours serving as a translator for Spanish-speaking families at her church and throughout the Lake City community.

However, only 1,000 students from over 50,000 applicants are selected annually to the Gates Millennium Scholars program, funded by a \$1 billion dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Even with her impressive credentials, Rebeca had to write 8 compelling 1,000-word essays and respond to 23 writing prompts to distinguish herself as an applicant. Working closely with Mychal and Nina Wynn-exchanging daily emails and text messages, and writing and rewriting drafts of her essays,

Rebeca was able to use each essay to effectively tell her story as a first generation U.S. citizen, beginning school as a non-English speaker, and the passion with which she pursues excellence in the classroom and on the soccer field.

The partnership between the Florence County School District 3 and the Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity began in 2014, when Yvonne Scott, Supervisor of College and Career Readiness, believed that the success the Wynns were having with students in other school districts could be replicated in Florence County School District 3. In the first year of the partnership, the Wynns worked with 18 students, beginning in a summer college planning boot camp and extending throughout the 2014/15 school year. The partnership experienced historic success with students admitted into 49 colleges, offered over \$3.2 million in scholarships and institutional aid, and Mikayla Hanna (University of Maryland-Baltimore County) being selected as the district's first Gates Millennium Scholar.

In 2015, Rebeca, and her twin brother, David, entered the boot camp as the first in their family to graduate high school with aspirations of attending college, but without any knowledge of the GMS program, how to apply to college, or how to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). However, with the Wynns guidance, and the in-school support of her teacher-mentor, Kristal Martinez, guidance counselors, Beverly Singletary and Kendra Wilson, and her own work ethic, Rebeca received acceptance letters from all 8 colleges to which she applied and will be enrolling at the College of Charleston to pursue a career as a Neonatal Nurse. Should Rebeca decide to continue her education into medical school to become a Pediatrician, the GMS funding will provide support for her graduate and postgraduate studies.

Superintendent of Schools, Laura Hickson, notes the importance of providing first generation students, and students from lower income backgrounds with the necessary support to expand their college and scholarship opportunities, "We recognize that applying to selective colleges and for competitive scholarships, like the GMS Program, is beyond the reach of most students who are the first in their family to attend college. Our partnership with the Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity, provides invaluable support for our guidance counselors and students. Mychal Wynn has written 28 books and he and his wife have helped hundreds of students, who are now attending undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical school programs. As a child of poverty and first in his family to attend college, Mr. Wynn has unique insight into the challenges faced by our students and their families."

Hickson added, "His wife, Nina, has a way of connecting with our students that reassures them that someone cares about their future, is vested in their success, and will support them from application through enrollment. While many high poverty school districts 'talk' about increasing college readiness and expanding college access, we are committed to doing everything possible to expand college access for our students. We believe that our students deserve this opportunity."

Rebeca is the 5th student whom Mychal and Nina Wynn have assisted in being selected as Gates Millennium Scholars, including their younger son, a 2012 Gates Millennium Scholar. Mrs. Wynn, who also serves as the Education Ministry Leader of the Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia, notes, "We have held Rebeca in our prayers since beginning her GMS application in October, 2015. We prayed when her application was submitted in January, celebrated when she was selected as a finalist in February, and today join she and her family in celebrating the answer to our prayers. Rebeca is most deserving, she is a top academic achiever, leader, and servant to her community with a genuine spirit of service and countenance of caring. Rebeca is concerned about her family, community, and school. She will be a wonderful ambassador for the Gates Millennium Scholars Program and an inspiration to first generation students everywhere."

Mychal and Nina Wynn, who are servant leaders, maintain close relationships with students throughout their undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical school studies. Their students, who are also eager to serve, share their on-campus experiences with high school students and host high school students and their parents when visiting their college campuses. Their College Planning Cohort Program is now working with students in California, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Bermuda. Collectively, students are earning millions of dollars in scholarships and being accepted into America's top colleges each year.

More information: <http://www.mychalwynn.com/> and <http://www.accessandequity.org/>.

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*PHOTO for media: Send2Press.com/mediaboom/16-0420-Rebeca-and-David-300dpi.jpg

*PHOTO Caption: Rebeca and her twin brother, David, researching colleges.

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