



Peñasco senior receives top scholarship to attend college

May 8, 2017

This month, Peñasco High School senior Charlyna Gonzales became the first person in her family to complete a college degree. Through a dual-credit program, she earned an associate’s degree in liberal arts from Northern New Mexico College before graduating from high school. She heads off to Colby College in Maine this fall. There, she’ll study biomedical engineering and physics with the help of a \$20,000 Gold Scholarship—the top award—from the Los Alamos Employees’ Scholarship Fund.

Student’s sports injury leads to an interest in medicine

Gonzales spent a lot of time outdoors, and activities on her abuelo’s land helped shape her in many ways. It was there that she says she developed an interest in athletics—chasing her sisters and cousins in the field, tossing the football, playing volleyball, even running and jumping fences to stay ahead of the water while helping to clean out the acequia that draws water from the Rio Pueblo for irrigation.

Because of a knee injury while playing volleyball, Gonzales’ interest in medicine grew. She credits the physical and financial challenge of her injury as a source of strength and opportunity.

“That was definitely a rough time. But my parents told me to never quit,” she recalls. “My injury made me want to find out more about [medicine]. I did a ton of research at the time, asking questions like, why did this happen to me? Why are women more susceptible to knee injuries?”

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Scholarship assistance demonstrates community support

“This scholarship will allow me to focus on my academics and help to minimize any financial burdens along the way. Most importantly, the scholarship will provide me with a boost of support from those who generously contribute to this prestigious scholarship

fund,” Gonzales says. “Thank you to the Lab for having a positive outlook on the abilities and futures of your students and this great country.”

Scholarships are supported by Laboratory employee donations and a \$250,000 match from Los Alamos National Security, LLC, with additional support from community members and local businesses.

Khaled Khweis and Wilbur Wang are the other two recipients of the 2017 LAESF top-level scholarships.

Academic excellence, first-gen college students, and outstanding leaders rewarded

Khaled Khweis of Taos High School and Wilbur Wang of Los Alamos High School are the other two recipients of the 2017 LAESF top-level scholarships. Khweis will study environmental engineering and political science at Columbia University, and Wang will pursue a degree in molecular biology from Princeton University. They are among [111 student winners](#) from the seven-county Northern New Mexico region who were selected to receive 117 scholarships totaling \$660,250.

The Gold Scholarship provides \$5,000 a year in financial assistance for four years to students who met the rigorous academic and merit-based requirements. Some award levels are determined by additional qualifications, which are detailed online at www.lanlfoundation.org. The nonprofit LANL Foundation manages the program and funds, with assistance from an advisory committee of elected volunteers.

Since its inception in 1998, the Los Alamos Employees’ Scholarship Fund totaling \$6.1 million has supported 1,181 local students pursuing higher education. The Laboratory workforce has donated \$4,120,158, with an additional \$2,962,739 from Los Alamos National Security, LLC.

Due to the generosity of donors, an additional \$237,750 was awarded to students in the past two years, marking a 38 percent increase in award payout.

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