



AVENUE SCHOLARS

Your Foundation for Success



the **PATHWAY**

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CELEBRATING AVENUE SCHOLARS



Honoree Kate Gordon

Kate Gordon, a 2016 Omaha Central graduate, starting as an intern at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska, recently was awarded a full-time claims processor position at the Omaha insurance company. In May, she received her Associate's Degree in Office Technology from MCC.



Honoree Vivi Molina

Viviana (Vivi) Molina, a 2018 Millard South Graduate, works full-time at Brookstone Village, a skilled nursing center in Omaha, while attending MCC to earn her Practical Nursing (LPN) certificate. Her ultimate goal is to become a Registered Nurse (RN) by May 2020.

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Avenue Scholars Foundation held its annual Celebration Luncheon April 25 at Baxter Arena. Jimmy John Liautaud (pictured above with four Avenue Scholars who also happen to be Jimmy John's employees), founder, owner, and chairman of Jimmy John's Sandwiches, was the keynote speaker. Clockwise, from below, The Shadowboxers provided musical entertainment, Mekhi Banks, an Omaha North graduate, served as emcee, and the Avenue Scholars Class of 2021 received information about the ASF program.



MCC instructor helps students find their voice

English instructors at Metropolitan Community College are an integral part of the postsecondary education of Avenue Scholars Foundation students. No matter the chosen career path, mastering the basic fundamentals of writing is critical to their future aspirations.

Alea Hall, a Composition and Developmental Writing Adjunct Professor at MCC, believes in the “power of writing. It can change your life.”

“Considering how language has evolved and how our world uses new forms of communication such as Twitter, how that communication is articulated and passed on to other people is so important,” Hall says. “If you can be active in and be part of those conversations, then you have a much better chance of navigating the world around you.”

Hall also believes in connecting with students on their level. She knows from personal experience about overcoming adversity.

“I had a difficult background in education. I was high school dropout. I was a D and F student,” she said. “So I understand coming into the classroom with different experiences. Many come in with language barriers or socioeconomic issues. I just try to be really honest with them. I tell them that just because you might be struggling, it’s not a template for your life. You can work through these things.”

Hall focuses on two key elements in her teaching: (1) recognizing and respecting the individual circumstances of each student; and (2) giving students a skill that’s practical.

ASF students have responded positively to Hall’s approach.

“I was never a big fan of English, especially my last semester of high school when I took two English classes,” says Papillion LaVista senior Luk Maidute. “Instructor Alea Hall’s class was different than



Alea Hall, a Composition and Developmental Writing teacher at Metropolitan Community College, has positively impacted Avenue Scholars students in her first year at MCC.

any other class I took because she didn’t hold our hands and at the same time showed an understanding about difficult situations that her students were facing. I really loved the discussions that took place in the classroom.

“I loved the discussions because they were interesting, made the class feel like 50 minutes instead of an hour and half, and I felt the discussions made me grow as a person because I got different perspectives on a topic or subject. I really surprised myself in this regard as I was very involved in the discussion instead of being a listener. I think she is a great teacher because she was flexible, but firm in what she wanted the students to do. My communications skills, writing skills, and my understanding of politics grew.”

Hall, a Springfield-Platteview graduate, started her postsecondary education at MCC, then transferred to UNO, where she earned Bachelor’s Degrees in Geography and Women’s & Gender Studies. She also received Master’s Degree in English at UNO.

For Hall, it’s important that her students enjoy their first college experience and that they develop their topics for writing, instead of her assigning a topic, or subject for a

writing assignment.

“What I love about Avenue Scholars is it takes place on the college campus,” Hall said. “I want them to enjoy the experience. They respond to that sense of freedom. They’re so used to these topics chosen for them. I might choose the format and type of research they do for the essay, but the topic is all them.”

Ashley Knott, Papillion LaVista High School Career Coach, believes Hall is a perfect teacher for Avenue Scholars students.

“When I sat in on the very first day of Alea’s class, I was impressed by the way in which she so freely disclosed some of the barriers she overcame to get to where she is today,” Knott said. “When she revealed that she had actually dropped out of high school herself, many jaws dropped — her authenticity and vulnerability hooked them. I watched Alea vary her approach with every single student. Above all, it was her willingness to see each of our students as unique individuals, each in need of being met right where they are in the moment. She did this masterfully, and I’m so grateful for the efforts she made to know our students and encourage them as people and learners.”

YBC internship program connects Scholars with business community

Not resting on its laurels, Avenue Scholars Foundation is embarking on a bold initiative for the 2019-2020 school year.

ASF and Millard Public Schools are partnering to provide students with paid internships that will serve as a springboard to their careers in Omaha. Through this partnership, administrators at both institutions “hope to not only give these youth an opportunity to explore their career ambitions and grow their professional skills while earning wages and academic credit, but to give the community a chance to engage, develop, and retain young talent through authentic work experiences.”

Ana Lopez Shalla, Avenue Scholars Foundation Program Coordinator,

says the initiative is being considered a “pilot program” this year.

“Over the past 11 years, ASF has become increasingly more intentional in its focus on enabling careers for students of hope and need,” Lopez Shalla says. “We felt we could extend the expertise we’ve developed to attack this problem to combating the wider ‘brain drain’ impacting the state of Nebraska. This resonated with Dr. Jim Sutfin, the superintendent of Millard Public Schools.”

Nearly 100 students, all juniors, from the Millard Public Schools and the eight schools — Millard South, Omaha Benson, Omaha Bryan, Omaha North, Omaha Northwest, Omaha South, Ralston, and Papillion LaVista — that ASF serves applied for 41 internship spots secured with 16 business partners, covering 28 programs.

At this time, YBC is focusing on four

industries: auto, trades & manufacturing, business, and information technology (IT).

The 16 business partners are Baxter Auto Group, H&H Automotive, Werner Enterprises, Woodhouse Auto Family, Bishop Business, CQuence Health Group, Millard Lumber, MPS Communication Department, Mutual of Omaha, ScoreVision, Douglas County Environmental Services, Tri-V Tool & Manufacturing, Security National Bank, Lozier, and APT Instruments.

The program begins this summer with

students first taking a required one-week Human Relations/Workplace Skills course. Students will receive credit from Metropolitan Community College for this course. They will then begin their paid internships on June 17, working 20-30

hours per week. An internship coach will be provided.

Senior year students will be enrolled in a career/technical education course in a career pathway program related to their internship. Students will continue their paid internships, working 10-20 hours per week.

For this initiative, ASF will provide most of the logistical and managerial support, while MPS will provide curricular and academic support. Both organizations will continue to collaborate to develop the strategic vision of the program.

“The ultimate vision is for Avenue Scholars to be the coordinating force for the program,” Shalla said. “We would be the intermediary between the districts we serve, the business community, and even state and local government entities, all working together to develop the workforce.”



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“Our mission is to ensure careers for committed students of hope and need through education/training and supportive relationships.”

Celebration

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HONOREE

Carlos Jeronimo Ramirez

Carlos Jeronimo Ramirez, a 2016 Omaha Bryan graduate, is working as a paid intern at Legacy Homes. After obtaining his Associate's Degree in Construction Management at MCC in May, Ramirez plans to continue his career in housing construction. His ultimate goal is to own and manage a construction business.

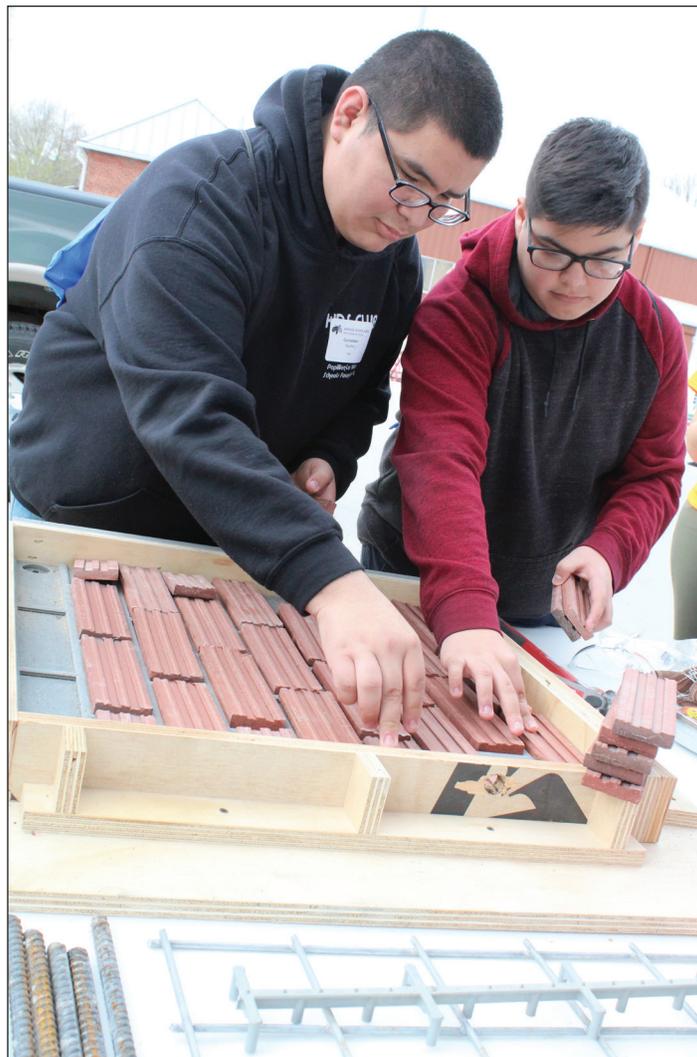


Honoree Gabriel Paz

Gabriel Paz, a 2018 Omaha Benson graduate, works full-time as a diesel mechanic at Cornhusker International. After obtaining his Associate's Degree in Diesel Technology from MCC in May, Paz plans to continue working and gaining experience in the industry before starting his own company.



EXPLORING CAREERS



Construction Career Day was held April 18 at the Metropolitan Community College Fort Omaha Campus.

Avenue Scholars got hands-on experience with building forms, operating heavy equipment and tile work.

Throughout the year, Scholars explored careers in business, trades, health care, culinary/hospitality, information technology (IT) and automotive.

