



**AVENUE SCHOLARS**

Your Foundation for Success



Newsletter Issue 3 Vol. 7 March 2019

Melissa Peterson (right), a Registered Nurse (RN) and CNA instructor at QLI, emphasizes a point while teaching Avenue Scholars, enrolled in the CNA program on the QLI campus. Kaitlyn Baker (below), a Millard South senior, practices a proper lifting technique for moving a patient from his bed.



## CNA program developing workforce

Avenue Scholars Foundation, partnering with Quality Living Inc. (QLI), Methodist College, and Metropolitan Community College, is making a big impact on training a workforce of nurses in the Omaha community.

This year 27 scholars — a record high — are enrolled in CNA programs at those three institutions. QLI, a first-time host for Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training of Avenue Scholars seniors, has 12 students enrolled in the program.

The staff at QLI, which specializes in rehabilitation for patients suffering from brain or spinal cord injuries, is excited to be working with Avenue Scholars Foundation to provide CNA instruction.

Melissa Peterson, a Registered Nurse at QLI, and certified to teach CNA classes, thinks highly of Avenue Scholars Foundation. For several years, QLI has welcomed Scholars to the campus for Career Exploration field trips.

“They have a big impact on young lives,” Peterson said. “We have long wanted to partner with Avenue

Scholars. We love their mission.”

Peterson and QLI CEO Patricia Kearns believe their campus has a lot to offer in terms of hands-on training.

“We can offer more time hands-on with patients who are disabled,” Peterson said. “Part of it [the partnership program] is us giving back to the community. Also, at the end of it, if it happens we have some students who want to come on board, that would be wonderful.”

Classroom instruction began in January. Students will take the CNA test at the end of April and receive their certification in May. Kearns says QLI is committed to developing and maintaining a bigger pool of trained nursing assistants.

“We have a built-in career model,” Kearns says. “For all our team members who come in, the sky is the limit [whether becoming care staff nurses or growing into leadership positions]. After getting a better understanding of the Avenue Scholars organization’s direction — a very career focused direction — and recognizing we

Shenandoah, Iowa

# Scholarships inspire hope for future



SCHANDA MILLER

**Academic Focus:**

Hospitality & Business Management

**Career Goal:** "I want to open up a resort."

**Comment:** "It [the scholarship] means a lot. I consider myself very lucky."

JERROD MOYER\*

**Academic Focus:**

Automotive Technology

**Career Goal:** "After I finish my degree, I plan to become a full technician at Woodhouse where I am currently employed."

**Comment:** "I wasn't even planning to attend college before the scholarship. It has given me an amazing opportunity to better myself. I am so thankful for that. It has opened so many doors for me already."

\*Photo not available

Four 2018 graduates of Shenandoah, Iowa, High School are pursuing college degrees, thanks to Avenue Scholars Foundation.

## COLE NEBEL

Cole Nebel is one of three Shenandoah students living in a University Village apartment on the University of Nebraska-Omaha campus, while attending classes at Metropolitan Community College.

Other Shenandoah graduates living on the UNO campus are Hope Gray and Jerrod Moyer. Schanda Miller commutes from her home in Shenandoah to classes on the Fort Omaha campus of MCC.

Nebel, who is pursuing a nursing degree, said the scholarship "sounded too good to be true."

He plans to complete his General Studies courses at MCC before enrolling in a nursing program, following in the footsteps of his mother, who has worked in hospital care, and his dad, a paramedic.

Nebel, who obtained his CNA certificate while still in high school, has to get Nebraska-registered for his CNA before finding a part-time job in the field.

"I hope to get a job soon at Children's Hospital," he said.

## HOPE GRAY

Gray, who is planning to earn an Associate's Degree in Culinary Arts and Hospitality, is attending classes on the Fort Omaha campus.

Later, she would like to add an Associate's Degree in Baking and Pastry.

Although Gray is now focused on a career as a restaurant chef, she said her "options are wide open. There is so much I could do."

To gain experience, Gray is working part-time in an Ameristar kitchen. Regardless of her future career, she is thankful for the education and training opportunities.

If not for the scholarship, Gray said, "I wasn't going to college."



Shenandoah (Iowa) High School graduate Cole Nebel stands outside the University Village apartments, where he lives on the University of Nebraska-Omaha campus.



Shenandoah (Iowa) High School graduate Hope Gray stands outside the University Village apartments, where she lives on the University of Nebraska-Omaha campus.

## Scholarship leads to career in nursing

Olivia Pike, a 2015 Millard West graduate, almost can't believe her good fortune.

Upon graduation, Pike received the Avenue-Horatio Alger Career Scholarship, paying for her for first two years of college at Metropolitan Community College, where she earned certification as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

"It is designed to cover the first two years of college, (up to \$4,000 per year)," Pike said.

Next, Pike plans to obtain an RN (Registered Nurse) certificate, which means she will have an Associate's Degree in nursing.

Since January Pike has been working for Mosaic, a non-profit, faith-based organization, that provides services for people with intellectual disabilities.

"Mosaic offers a lot of services at facilities all over Omaha," Pike said. "It's really a cool organization. I love it."

After obtaining her RN license, Pike plans to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing.

Pike is still amazed and appreciative of



the scholarship and the mentoring of ASF Career Coach Catie Dagle and MCC Navigator Tyler Cannon.

"They have bent over backwards to help me," Pike says.

## Scholar finds 'calling' as phlebotomist

The strength an individual might discover in overcoming a phobia can lead to great rewards. It worked for 26-year-old Alexis Harris, a 2011 Omaha Central graduate now working full-time at CHI Lakeside Hospital.

"I wanted to get over my fear of needles," Harris said, when asked what had inspired her to seek a career in nursing.

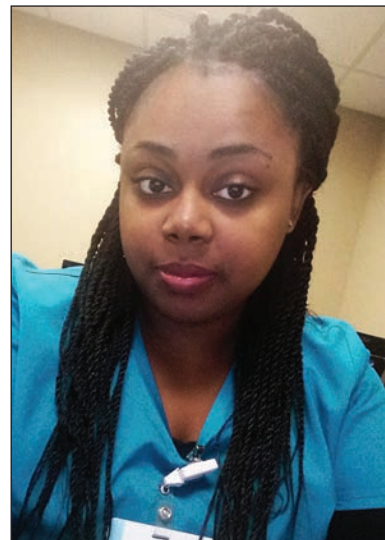
Officially, Harris is called a phlebotomist — a person who "draws blood."

After graduating from Central, with the assistance of the Avenue Scholars Foundation, Harris attended Metropolitan Community College and obtained a CNA license. She also worked as an intern at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska.

Thanks to a scholarship program offered through Methodist Hospital, Harris was able to enroll in an "intense" 16-week lab/lecture course to obtain her phlebotomist certificate. (As of this writing, Harris was still studying to take the final certification test to be "registered.")

"If not for Avenue Scholars, I would not be this far on my career path," Harris said. "I really appreciate everything they have done for me." Harris credits ASF coaches Marissa Marx and Catie Dagle, and MCC Navigator Jessica Drake for guiding her on the path to a rewarding career.

For Harris, the next career step is to become a medical assistant. For now,



she feels comfortable where she is in her career journey.

"I love what I do," she says. "I have worked in different settings. This is the best one so far. I found my calling. I'm really happy. The hours have worked out; I'm well paid for my work. I found peace."

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Avenue Scholars Foundation  
7101 Mercy Road, Suite 240  
Omaha, NE 68106

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

## CNA program continued from Page 1

are in the position of needing more members on our team, we thought it was reasonable for us and other organizations in our community to be more committed to developing our future workforce.”

With those directions and goals in mind, QLI moved forward with the commitment of providing another career-training opportunity for Scholars

“The next obvious step, aligning with Avenue Scholars, was to offer this training program,” Kearns said. “Not only do they get their CNA certificate as high school seniors, but they have a head start on developing soft skills training and [receiving] mentoring, which is part of our program as well.

“It’s one thing to have the technical skills, but it’s another to have the experience engaging with people in a way that promotes healing and recovery. Our goal is to start working

with individuals at a younger age.”

Kaitlyn Baker, a Millard South senior, is thankful for the opportunity to get the experience and the training.

“I want to be a nurse, so I knew this would be a good stepping stone,” she said. “The staff here is very professional and very nice.”

Yuri Carrazco, a CNA at QLI, and assistant instructor for the training program, sees a lot of potential in the Scholars.

“We are all learning as we grow,” Carrazco said. “We love the idea that they could get their CNA here and potentially find a job here.”

Kearns believes they would find a great home for a career at QLI.

“What we have built here over 29 years is a community,” Kearns said. “It’s a community in which certainly the people we serve and our families can thrive, but also our team members can thrive.”



Millard South seniors Ame Kanley (left) and Cheyenne Stephens (right) practice proper procedures for transferring a patient from a bed to a wheelchair, under the watchful eye of Yuri Carrazco (center), a CNA staff member at QLI.



Avenue Scholars Foundation students and staff listen to presentations from employers during a Network event, held at ASF offices Jan. 31.

## Employers, students network at event

Nine employers and 18 Avenue Scholars attended a Network event Jan. 31 at the Avenue Scholars Foundation offices.

Brittani Tanhueco, Post-Secondary Career Coach, was pleased with the turnout.

“Avenue Scholars serves as a bridge to connect employers to students,” Tanhueco said. “So, I love events like this where we can have multiple employers and students in the same room.”

Participating employers: State of Nebraska (Corrections and Probation), CHI Behavioral Health, Juvenile Justice Center, Douglas County Youth Center, Boys Town, Bellevue Police Department, Nebraska State Patrol, and Encor.