

Aksarben awards 194 scholarships to Scholars

The prospects of obtaining the degree and training required for a satisfying career in a high-demand field — while incurring little or no debt — became very bright for 194 Metro area students when it was announced at an April 28 press conference that they had been awarded the first ever community college scholarships under the new AKSARBEN Scholars Career Connectors program.

A committee representing AKSARBEN, Metropolitan Community College and Avenue Scholars Foundation worked together to review all 404 nominations and to determine the award winners. Committee members were Jon Burt (AKSARBEN Foundation President), Pat Crisler (MCC Associate Vice President of Development), Jeanie Jones (2015 Women's Ball Committee Chair), Laura Miller (ASF Curriculum Director), Doug Pierson (ASF Program Director) and Jef Johnston (ASF Chief Operating Officer). Committee members were happy with the results.

"Given the short amount of time we had to get a system up and running (six weeks), we are satisfied with the process and results," Pierson said. "However, we will change the timeline and process for next year.



CAREER CONNECTORS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS: Jon Burt, AKSARBEN Foundation President, scholarship winners Su Reh (Omaha South), Quinton Cross (Omaha Central), and Genesis Martinez-Nunez (Omaha Central), Mike Yanney, past Board Director of Avenue Scholars Foundation, and Steve Martin, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska CEO.

Instead of opening the nomination process in March and ending it in April, we will open in the fall and end in January."

The goal of this scholarship program is to prepare motivated, low-income students for careers in construction, health, information technology and other high-demand fields and to help area businesses find skilled workers. One of the criteria for scholarship applicants was that they identify one of these fields as an MCC program choice.

Other criteria considered were students' GPA, attendance, transcripts, test scores (Compass and/or ACT), and counselor or Talent Advisor recommendations.

Each scholarship is worth

up to \$8,000 — AKSARBEN and MCC each will contribute up to \$4,000.

"For most participants, this is the start of a lifelong career path," Burt told the *Omaha World-Herald*.

All Career Connectors scholarship recipients will become part of the Avenue Scholars program, which means they will all be assigned to a Career Talent Advisor. In addition, each student will work with a Campus Navigator provided by MCC. To start, Metro is dedicating three staff members to the program.

Career Connectors sent scholarship offers to students from 20 area public high schools.

Omaha South received the most scholarships with 20, followed by Omaha

Bryan with 17. Thirty-five students already attending Metro also were awarded scholarships through the new program.

One of the recipients, Elam Turner believes the program benefits the entire community.

"To encourage and ensure the younger generation of being in good hands is a great feeling," Turner said.

Pierson foresees the program continuing to grow.

"We are committed to building the scholarship program and adding additional awards in the years to come," he said. "ASF will add two high schools next year and seven more the following school year. The number of awards will increase for each of the next two or three years, perhaps doubling."

Avenue Scholar, Nicole Rose, leaves memories

Nicole Anna Rose

September 13, 1994-April 28, 2015

"My main goal is to focus on myself and my own happiness in order to spread that to the ones I love. My time is coming to an end, but I'm going to make it the best I can make it."

– Nicole Rose, Posted December 15, 2014

The following is a reflection by Career Talent Advisor Jermaine Jones on Rose's experience in the Avenue Scholars Foundation program and her impact on friends, classmates and staff.

Nicole Rose began the Avenue Scholars Program in August of 2010 at Millard South High School. Nicole was unique in her own way. She did not conform to the status quo as she dressed in black, gothic-like clothing, Korn T-shirts, and chains dangling from the waist of her jeans.

Although Nicole had her own style, she was loved and admired by many of her peers. She was respected because of her independence and cherished for her warm personality.

"She was always so positive and loved life no matter the circumstances," said Kiara Scales, fellow Avenue Scholar and close friend of Nicole.

After graduating from Millard South in May of 2012, she attended Metro Community College and stayed in housing at the University of Nebraska-Omaha with other Avenue Scholars. Nicole had no problem finding roommates and was often "the life of the party" during campus activities.

In early 2014, Nicole was diagnosed with a very rare case of Stage 4 Ovarian Cancer. Nicole moved out of the dorms and was under the care of her mother, Constance Rose. Nicole fought a valiant fight against this terrible disease. During the Spring of 2014, Nicole posted a tweet on social media about wanting to meet her favorite band, Korn, as a dying wish. This caught the attention of another fellow Korn



NICOLE ROSE. One of Nicole's dying wishes was to meet the band, Korn. Here, she poses with one of the Korn band members.

fan and Nicole was eventually able to meet Korn in Jacksonville, Florida, and had the experience of a lifetime.

Nicole was a dedicated Avenue Scholar who participated in many activities. She was respectful, hard working, and dedicated to living life to the fullest each and every day. Her energy and charisma live on through everyone that was blessed to have known her.

"Very few people in this life can find joy in living a simplistic life," said Justin Hammett, a close friend of Nicole. "Nicole was unequivocally content with staying at home, going over to her friend's house on the weekends, and finding pleasure in things that we take for granted every day."

Obituary, Omaha World-Herald

Rose, Nicole Anna

"Nicole is remembered for her smart and witty personality, her tenacious strength, and most of all, her unconditional love for her mother. She is survived by her mother, Constance Rose; grandmother, Annie B. Rose; and numerous loving friends."



TEAMWORK. Mike Reynolds, MCC Campus Director; Greg Adams, CEO/President of Accelerate Nebraska; Ken Bird, CEO/President of Avenue Scholars Foundation; and Kurt Beier, First Institute Executive Director, introduced the Omaha business community to Welding on Wheels, a mobile training facility for novice welders.

Welding on Wheels comes to Omaha

Thanks to Avenue Scholars Foundation and Accelerate Nebraska, a nonprofit that aims to ensure high school and college students have the skills employers are looking for, Omaha businesses were introduced to a welding on wheels program created by First Institute Training & Management, an Illinois company.

The mobile unit was on display and open for viewing Thursday, April 23, in the parking lot outside the office building where Avenue Scholars offices are located.



John Albin, Nebraska Commissioner of Labor looks on as Rick Miller, First Institute Operations Manager, provides an examples of a good weld versus a bad weld inside the mobile welding lab.

Superheroes make impression at spring luncheon



Superheroes Antony Ward (front), Terrence Thomas and Raven Fulkerson strike a pose with Walter Scott, Jr., ASF Chairman of the Board.

Moral Superheroes Terrence Thomas III (“Izzy Integrity”) Antony Ward (“Moral Moe”) and Raven Fulkerson (“Reese the Responsible”) were big hits at the annual Avenue Scholars Foundation Luncheon.

Thomas, Ward and Fulkerson, all Avenue Scholars attending Metropolitan Community College, were recruited last year by Career Services Director Terry Fischer to play the roles of these superheroes, which are a creation of the Omaha Business Ethics Alliance. Goals include providing rigorous education that influences youth choices and a program that increases ethics education visibility across the city. College students, dressed as moral superheroes, teach elementary students core values of Ethical Omaha: accountability, community responsibility, financial vitality, integrity and moral courage.

According to Fischer, the recruits attended two summer camps at the Omaha Children’s Museum last summer and interacted with the elementary students.

“The Avenue Scholars students also dressed in the costume to make a commercial last summer on behalf of the Business Ethics Alliance,” Fischer said.

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



Spring luncheon celebrates success

Community partnerships and student achievement were celebrated at the Avenue Scholars Foundation Spring Luncheon. ABOVE: Talent Advisor Emily Christensen takes a photo of Alejandro Cardenas, an MCC graduate and part-time employee at Blue Cross Blue Shield; BCBS executives Gerette Wonderly, Laura Rogge and Jennifer Richardson; and Ismael Pascual, an MCC graduate and second-year intern at BCBS. LEFT: Annie Bird, Dr. Samuel Meisels, executive director of the Buffet Early Childhood Institute, and Dr. Matt Blomstedt, Nebraska Commissioner of Education, enjoy some social time prior to the luncheon.



FAR LEFT: Scott Hazelrigg (right), NorthStar Foundation President and luncheon emcee, visits with Mike Yanney, past ASF Board Director. ABOVE: Scholar Aquil Muhammad introduces a distinguished guest at the luncheon, with his girlfriend, J'Lynne Young, smiling from a poster in the background.