



**Right:** Marlin Briscoe, a 1963 Omaha South graduate and the first starting African American quarterback in the NFL, was the featured speaker for the 2016 Celebration Luncheon. **Below:** Omaha South senior Lizbeth Perez Hernandez introduced the luncheon emcees, Courtland Olson and Monica Wells.



## ASF luncheon honors Scholars

Students recently enrolled in the Avenue Scholars Foundation program were honored at the annual spring luncheon on Thursday, April 28.

Football legend Marlin Briscoe, an Omaha South graduate, was the featured speaker. Briscoe, a member of the 2016 College Football Hall of Fame class, encouraged Scholars to “never give up on themselves or their goals.”

Gadiel Salinas of Omaha South had the honor of introducing Briscoe to the audience at The Institute for the Culinary Arts on the MCC Fort Omaha campus.

**Clockwise, from above:** A new Avenue Scholar gladly raises his hand to be recognized as a member of the 2016-2017 class; Ken Bird, Avenue Scholars Foundation CEO, and board members congratulate Mickey Anderson and Shawn Arkfeld of Baxter Auto, one of the Friends of Avenue Scholars Foundation award recipients; Kenya Tilson, a 2016 Omaha Northwest graduate, introduces a distinguished guest; Dr. Bird poses with Briscoe and John Beasley, a local actor and producer.



# ASF sets North grad on work path

“Avenue Scholars prepares us for life after high school,” says Keven Washington, Jr., a 2015 Omaha North graduate.

For Washington, life after high school means working in the construction industry. Washington started working for Hawkins Construction May 9. His starting pay is \$17 per hour.

“We get paid every Friday,” Washington said. “I actually like this job.”

Washington knew he wanted to work in construction when he took a trades class at Metropolitan Community College during his senior year in the Avenue Scholars program.

“That got me set in my mind that I wanted to do construction for a career,” he said.

Initially, Washington enrolled at MCC to learn the trade.

“That didn’t work out; I had to stop going [because of] family issues,” he said. “I heard Hawkins was hiring, so I applied for labor. It all started with Mark Pope, the Hawkins human resources director. I went through the process, the drug screening, etc. Now, here I am.”

Washington has goals of learning more on the job.

“I want to vary my skills; I want to be able to operate the cranes and other machines. I want to do everything across the board, as much as I can,” he says.

The present job site for Washington is on the Bellevue University campus, in a building that will become a new science lab. He is part of the demolition crew that is gutting an older building to prepare space for the new lab.

“I like the job,” he says. “My manager is cool. My co-workers are good. This is where I want to be.”



**ON THE JOB.** Keven Washington, Jr., an Omaha North graduate, gets some guidance from Mark Weatherbee, a Hawkins Construction site supervisor. Weatherbee is supervising the interior demolition of a building on the Bellevue University campus. Washington, who discovered his career interest while exploring trades in the Avenue Scholars program, started working for Hawkins Construction May 9.

*AKSARBEN Horatio Alger Career Scholarships*

# Program taps 206 new students

Two hundred and six.

That is the number of young men and women who have a brighter, more optimistic outlook on their future due to being named the 2016 recipients of the AKSARBEN Horatio Alger Career Scholarships.

The scholarships award students up to \$4,000 per year for two years to attend Metropolitan Community College (MCC).

Scholarship recipients hail from 19 metro high schools — Ralston, Omaha Bryan, Omaha Burke, Omaha South, Omaha North, Platteview, Millard South, DC West, Bellevue West, Papillion La Vista, Papillion La Vista South, Bellevue East, Millard West, Omaha Benson, Gretna, Omaha Gross, Omaha Central, Millard Horizon, OPS Accelere — and MCC.

In 2015, scholarships were awarded to 196 students. Doug Pierson, Avenue Scholars Foundation Programs Director, believes the scholarship program is meeting its goals, but can continue to improve.

“We are pleased but not satisfied,” Pierson said. “We had good first year retention, but we are hoping to do even better in

subsequent years.”

Scholarship recipients are expected to earn a certificate in two to three years in one of the approved MCC programs, maintain good academic standing as defined by MCC, and maintain good standing with ASF.

Avenue Scholars Foundation provides support in the form of a Career Talent Advisor, who helps students overcome “any life barriers standing in the way of education and employment.” Students also work with an MCC Navigator to “navigate the college system, select a program of study, work through any financial problems related to college and earn good grades in all classes.”

As part of the scholarship application process, students are required to identify a career interest or program. Scholarship recipients identified 29 different MCC programs, ranging from Architectural Design Technology to Welding Technology.

Pierson expects the program to maintain a similar level of interest in the future.

“We hope to hold steady at about 200 scholarships each year until additional funding will allow additional staff,” he said.

## ASF named 2015-2016 TeamMates Champion

Avenue Scholars Foundation received the 2015-16 TeamMates Champion award at the TeamMates 2016 End of the Year Celebration, held Tuesday, May 3, at the Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo.

This award is given to an organization that has exhibited an incredible level of teamwork, commitment and dedication to the TeamMates organization.

AFS was cited “for your commitment and support to the TeamMates Mentoring Program.” The award was accepted by Brad Ekwerekwu, Director of Career Programs, and Jamar Dorsey, Director of High School Programs.



Jamar Dorsey, Michael Hughes, Monica Wells, and Brad Ekwerekwu represented Avenue Scholars Foundation May 3 at the TeamMates 2016 End of Year Celebration where they accepted the TeamMates Champion Award.

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

## Senior Luncheon honors 101 students

Wednesday, May 4, in the Stockyards Exchange Building ballroom, Avenue Scholars Foundation celebrated the 101 students who successfully completed Senior Academy at Metropolitan Community College.

As part of Senior Academy, students were enrolled in an academic course at MCC and an additional college and career prep course called Work 1230. All students earned college credit and will start at MCC next fall with more confidence because of their experiences during the semester.

At the luncheon, students watched a video created by Albert Varas, ASF Career Talent Advisor, and heard from student speakers: Sammie Randall, Bernardo Castellanos, Javon Minton, De’Vonte Carter, and DeAndre Gaines.

A number of students were also recognized for outstanding performance in their academic class and/or for their stellar attendance.



**Above:** Safia Aden and Mamnugu Hamadi take their seats at the Senior Academy Luncheon. **Below Right:** De’Vonte Carter (left) and Javon Minton (right) introduce speakers during the Senior Luncheon.

# SPRING LUNCHEONS CELEBRATE AVENUE SCHOLARS



**Far Left:** Doug Pierson, Programs Director; Annie Bird, wife of Avenue Scholars Foundation CEO Ken Bird; and Terry Fischer, Career Services Director, enjoy a happy moment after the conclusion of another successful spring luncheon. **Left:** High school Talent Advisor Ashley Knott proudly poses for a group shot with her Papillion La Vista students.