



**ON THE JOB.** (Above left) Luis Cortez-Molina is all smiles as he puts the finishes touches on a courtesy vehicle at Baxter Auto's Lexus dealership. (Above right) Drew Jones works his way around a Lexus in the detailing garage. Both Scholars started working in July.

## Baxter provides preview to careers in auto industry

Luis Cortez-Molina, an Omaha Bryan senior, and Drew Jones, a Metropolitan Community College freshman, literally have their feet inside the doors of careers in the automobile industry.

The past two months they have worked at Baxter Auto's Lexus dealership, detailing cars in the service department. Cortez-Molina hopes to one day have a career in auto-collision. Jones is seeking to earn an associate's degree in auto technology at MCC.

"I like it a lot," Jones said. "I am really interested in cars, so it's all fun."

Cortez-Molina is looking forward to receiving an Aksarben-Horatio Alger scholarship that would enable him to attend MCC and enroll in the auto-collision program.

Over the past two years, Baxter Auto has partnered with Avenue Scholars Foundation to introduce students to careers in the automo-



(From left) Drew Jones, an Avenue Scholar in his freshman year at MCC, Lexus Detail Manager Randy Morse, and Luis Cortez-Molina, an Avenue Scholar in his senior year at Omaha Bryan, take time out from work for a photo.

bile industry. Since 2015, they have employed 11 students at four locations: Chrysler at Bellevue, Lexus at 13025 West Dodge Road, Mercedes at 14335 Hillsdale Ave, and Subaru at Westroads.

Janelle Hyman, Talent Acquisition Partner for Baxter, says working with Avenue Scholars Foundation has been beneficial for everyone.

"Baxter's partnership with Avenue Scholars has given students the opportunity to utilize their skills by

growing and developing within our organization," Hyman said.

Last April, Baxter hosted 30 to 40 Avenue Scholars at its Lexus dealership to provide information about the opportunities in the automobile industry. Hyman said demonstration stations were set up for jobs in sales, financial, detailing, office, administration, and other areas.

"It's all about the kids," Hyman said. "It's an opportunity to see them grow."

# Driving school prepares Scholars for test

In the United States, powered mostly by a car-driven workforce, having a drivers' license is a high priority. Bob's Driving School has been an invaluable resource in helping Avenue Scholars achieve this goal.

"Over the summer ASF sponsored eight students to go through a Driver's Education Course through Bob's Driving School to help progress them on their path of obtaining their Driver's License," said Kelly Bernadt, Student Support Coordinator. "Some students had little to no experience behind the wheel, while others after the week of classroom and driving instruction were able to take and pass the driving test, ultimately getting their license."

The eight students are all attending Metropolitan Community College this fall: Jonathan Smith, Dylan Gladden, Lana Zellner, Phillip Demi, Alycia



**BOB'S DRIVING SCHOOL.** Bob Grabowski poses with the car he utilizes in teaching students to drive while taking classes. Grabowski has operated and owned his driving school for the past five years.

Reed, Caitlyn Hall, Alison Martins, and Mamnungu Hamadi.

Bernadt said Hamadi was the only one of the eight who actually got her license within that week of the class, but noted the others were continuing to prepare and study before attempting to obtain their license this fall.

"Transportation is a

barrier that many of our students face in their path to a career. Our goal is to help students gain this independent living skill so they will be able to provide their own reliable transportation and not have to rely on public transit, cabs, friends, or family," Bernadt said. "Get-

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*New Staff*

## TALENT ADVISORS

**Duties:** Working with high school juniors and seniors as a teacher, mentor and advocate to help them achieve their career goals

**Brittani Tanhueco**  
Talent Advisor  
Omaha Bryan



**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Previous Work Experience:** UNL Office of Admissions; Talent Plus; Americorps; Nebraska Families Collaborative; Boys Town

**On Working at ASF:** I am excited to be able to assist youth in developing their employability skills and in seeing them meet goals they never thought were possible.

**Beth Leach**  
Talent Advisor  
Ralston



**Education:** Bachelor's degree in English, Rice University; MA in Curriculum and Instruction, Doane College; National Board Certified Teacher

**Previous Work Experience:** English teacher, Omaha Westside High School, 9 years

**On Working at ASF:** I am excited about meeting a great need. The transition from high school to college or the working world is difficult for many young people. I am interested in helping them maximize their potential and set themselves up for a brighter future.

*New Staff*

## COLLEGE SUCCESS NAVIGATORS

**Matt O'Malley**  
College Success Navigator  
MCC



**Duties:** Academic Advisor for Aksarben Scholarship students  
**Education:** Bachelor's degree in General Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha;  
**Previous Work Experience:** Enrollment Specialist Assistant in Enrollment Department at MCC  
**On Working with ASF:** I was attracted to having the opportunity to be in front of students — with a background similar to Avenue Scholar students — every day. I see this position as a perfect fit for the way I'm wired, to impact students by being a resource or a mentor, when needed.

**Amanda Ponce**  
College Success Navigator  
MCC



**Duties:** Academic Advisor for Aksarben Scholarship students  
**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Political Science University of Nebraska-Lincoln;  
**Previous Work Experience:** Assistant Director of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Admissions; Juvenile Service Officer/Case Manager for NDHHS  
**On Working with ASF:** I have a passion for serving young people and helping them discover their potential. I am excited to watch students transition and grow during their time in college.

**Daniel Jaimes**  
Talent Advisor  
Omaha Bryan



**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Nebraska-Kearney

**Previous Work Experience:** Spanish teacher in preschool and after school programs in Grand Island; hall director at University of Nebraska-Kearney; PE teacher at Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney

**On Working at ASF:** I am excited to be working with this group of students. I have heard nothing but good things about them.

## Chavez-Perez climbing career ladder at BCBS

“They don’t let you stop!”

For Adriana Chavez-Perez, that never-give-up attitude instilled in her through Avenue Scholars Foundation staff has been the key factor in her rise to a full-time, good salary position at Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Chavez-Perez was recently promoted to Coordination of Benefits Specialist, a position that provides a \$35,000 salary. She says former Omaha Bryan Talent Advisor Emily Christensen, Student Support Coordinator Kelly Bernadt and Career Talent Advisor Albert Varas gave her the push she needed to succeed.

“She (Christensen) helped me quite a bit,” Chavez-Perez said. “She stressed the importance of being on time. I always received a lot of support, especially when I had a baby. The whole Foundation, in general, is a lot about support and guidance. They really make sure you get where you want to be. They don’t let you stop. They don’t let you give up. It’s been amazing to me.

“I really like the job I have now; it’s thanks to the program and their [connections] to so many organizations,” she said. “It’s helped me a lot with my daughter. I can raise her on my own without any help.”



Chavez-Perez says the birth of her daughter, Alayna, now a 1-year-old, “motivates me a little more. Before I didn’t really have a reason to try hard. Now I do. I can’t stop. I can’t give up.”

Another benefit of working for BCBS is tuition reimbursement, which Chavez-Perez plans to take advantage of to achieve her goal of earning a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and Management at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Ultimately, she would like to advance in the BCBS organization because “I really like it there. Everyone’s friendly. There are many advancement opportunities. If I can, I would really to stay there, make my career there.”

## Desire to help people drives North grad

Laying carpet is paying the bills, but his Career Talent Advisor convinced Kai-Jahn Henry he was capable of building a more promising career by enrolling in the criminal justice program at Metropolitan Community College.

Now, with an Associate’s Degree in Criminal Justice in hand, Henry is ready to take the next step toward becoming a police officer or sheriff. The journey, however, has not been easy.

“The first year [at MCC] was hard; I didn’t know if I was going to get through it,” Henry said. “I sat down with [my advisor] again, and he said to just keeping fighting through it. Three years later I graduated with my Criminal Justice degree.”



The next step is take the “COPS” exam this month. Once Henry takes the exam, his scores will be sent out to the police department.

“I am preparing to do the best I can,” Henry said.

Career Talent Advisor Albert Varas has helped Henry find additional motivation, including “some ride-alongs” with a patrol officer. Henry also had some built-in motivation.

“I have had some people not believing in me,” he said. “I had to prove *them* wrong, not just prove *myself* right.”

Henry believes becoming a police officer would fulfill his goal of having a career focused on helping people.

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Avenue Scholars Foundation

7101 Mercy Road, Suite 240

Omaha, NE 68106

402-916-9777

Fax: 402-614-5977

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

# ORIENTATION DAY FOR MCC SCHOLARS

**SCHOOL DAYS.** ASF Career Talent Advisors and MCC College Success Navigators hosted MCC freshmen for a back-to-school orientation Aug. 26 at the Fort Omaha Campus. (Right) Shiesha Robinson has the full attention of College Success Navigator Jessica Hendricks while asking a question about attending MCC. (Below) Aaron Espinoza takes notes during a presentation in a lecture hall.



(Right) Bret-tany McCar-ther listens as J'Lynne Young gives her perspec-tive on how to get the most out of attend-ing classes at Metro-politan Community College. McCarther and Young, graduates of MCC, also explained how to utilize the advice of advisors.



(Above) Nakiya Whitelaw pays close attention to MCC Navigator Hector Martinez during a tour of Building 10 on the Fort Omaha Campus.

## Driving School *continued from Page 2*

ting to and from school and work consistently and on time is more control-able when the student is independent."

Bob Grabowski, who retired from Omaha Public Schools schools after a 40-year career, has owned his driving school for five years.

Throughout his teach-ing career, Grabowski worked part-time as a driving school instructor.

In his association with Avenue Scholars Founda-tion the past two years, his primary goal has been to "get them ready for the test."

Grabowski often trans-ports the students to the DMV and allows him/her to drive his car for the test.

Grabowski says that during his training, "I go over attitude a lot – the idea of taking it [driving]

seriously."

For Hamadi, an Omaha South graduate, passing her driver's test was a big moment.

"Bob's Driving School helped me so much," she said. "If you pay attention and listen, everything will become easy. I was so excited that I could finally drive and be able to go where I want without an adult sitting next to me," Hamadi said.



**Mamnungu Hamadi** proudly displays her driver's license.