



school on wheels inc.

Tutoring Homeless Children Since 1993

August 2011



Catherine McAulay Scholarship



Raven Williams



Kaleef Starks



April Gonzalez



Lexie Looker

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Our first scholarship was awarded in 2008 to a young girl who lived in Skid Row and about whom her School on Wheels tutor wrote: "She has had a hellish life. Her childhood memories will be of watching junkies shoot up, avoiding vomit and needles on the streets, dodging pedophiles, and witnessing the horrific murder of a neighbor woman. Through all of this, she has always maintained the desire to be educated. From the time I first met her, she wanted to be a neurologist." She is on her way to doing so.

We then gave a scholarship to Tireace so she could buy books and have enough money for a bus pass to get to Community College. And one to Damon so he could have a laptop to study and write music, his passion. Angela Sanchez, a straight-A student living in a shelter wrote a beautiful, heartbreaking application letter to us filled with determination to attend UCLA. She is now in her second year and has started her own School on Wheels group there.

In this newsletter, you will read about three of our recent scholarship recipients:

Kaleef Starks' life has been filled with pain. What he has accomplished is nothing less than amazing.

April Gonzalez makes me smile. Her joy and love for life shine through – she signed her application essay, "love with all my heart."

Raven Williams will accomplish whatever she sets her mind to. She always believes in the impossible.

How could we not be proud of our students? Their hard work and dedication to their education in the face of so many obstacles are astounding and humbling. We know they will be successful and inspire others. Not everyone is so successful, however. There are hundreds of thousands of homeless kids who have been traumatized by their lives, overwhelmed by their circumstances, defeated by their lack of support. They have to find a way to get to school; they must learn to navigate new schools and teachers; they may not have eaten or slept well for days; they don't have a quiet place to do homework – the list goes on. We need to reach all of these students. We know that with a little help, encouragement and someone to believe in them, they too can accomplish what Kaleef, Raven and April have.

We know too, that we could not accomplish any of this without you—our good friends and supporters—from our inspiring youngest donors whom you will read about in this newsletter to our generous large foundation supporters, and everyone in between. Thank you to all of you for the difference you are making in the life of a homeless student.

With deep appreciation,

Catherine Meek
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jon Tomlin, Ph. D.
President
Principal, Navigant
Economics

Valerie Cavanaugh,
Secretary
Partner, C.K. Partners

Steven F. Dahlberg,
Treasurer
President, The Kissel
Company, Inc.

Joshua A. Fein
Chief Financial Officer,
Property Management
Associates, Inc.

Laurie Levit
Educational Consultant,
Retired Independent
Television Producer

Catherine Meek
Executive Director, School on
Wheels

Cecil L. "Chip" Murray
Prof. of Religion, Tanzy Chair
in Christian Ethics, University
of Southern California

Clifford Neiman
Principal, The Neiman Group

Janet Ambrosi Wertman
Development Consultant

SCHOLARSHIP STORIES

“School on Wheels gave me hope when I had none. Whenever I was struggling in my classes, I always had a School on Wheels tutor that I knew I could count on. This program has played a major role in my success and for that, I am grateful.” -Kaleef Starks

School on Wheels awards scholarships every year. Below are our most recent recipients.

Raven Williams



Raven's desire to help others who have experienced trauma will serve her well when she attends San Jose State to study mental health and child psychology.

Raven was delighted to speak with us when we asked her to share her thoughts on School on Wheels, graduation, and more:

How did you find the motivation within yourself to graduate from high school?

My motivation came from being around other women in the shelter. Everyone had a dream at one point, but they just gave up. I knew I had to succeed for them and for myself.

How important has it been for you to have a School on Wheels tutor in your life?

When I first met Anna, I didn't think there was much we could do. I was almost a year behind in credits, but we made a plan together. Anna called and emailed me all the time to make sure I was staying on track. I really needed that because my mom was too busy trying to get us out of the shelter. Anna was the only one there for me.

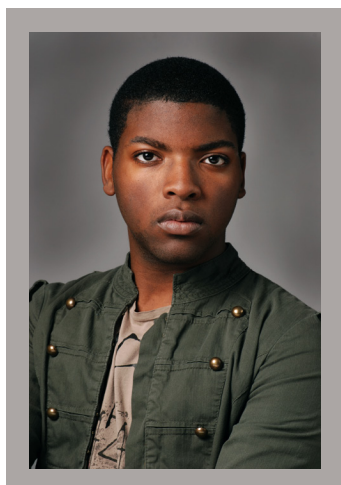
If you could send a message to the younger generation of homeless children, what would it be?

Despite what you see around you, believe in the impossible. I want to go to medical school someday, and around here, that seems impossible. But even if I don't make it all the way to medical school, I know I will go far.

Anna Chow, Raven's tutor, shares positive words about her exceptional student:

“Raven has been through a lot of instability with her family and has experienced homelessness. At such a young age, the hardships that Raven has endured have caused her to stay strong; she is determined not to let her past predict her future.”

Kaleef Starks



Despite a background of homelessness, abuse, and neglect, Kaleef has “overcome daunting circumstances” and earned a place at UCLA, where he will begin studying communications this fall.

Here is an excerpt from Kaleef's powerful scholarship essay:

“Ever since I can remember, my father was very abusive towards me. He used whatever was in his reach to hurt me...I then moved to Pasadena with my mother, who was also physically abusive....We did not have running water, sufficient clothing, or food. Throughout this ordeal, I managed to attend school daily and strive for success.

No matter what challenges I faced, I have persevered and made sure that my education remained a priority. My financial situation has impacted my desire for an education. I've always known that education is the hand that will unveil the positive and thriving life to which I was blinded, and, up until now, denied.”

Kaleef's tutor, Mark Cermak, describes his dedicated student:

“Kaleef is very smart, but more importantly, he is extremely hardworking and driven...The sky is truly the limit for him.”

SCHOLARSHIP STORIES

April Gonzalez



Tutor Norah Lally and April

April, who succeeded in getting her grades up from D's to A's, will go to the Skills of Leadership camp at CSU Northridge this summer.

Sandra Gonzalez, April's mother, shares her feelings about her daughter's achievements:

"My daughter has had to cope with more difficulties than a normal little girl. This affected her academically, even when she was trying hard. Just at that time, Norah came in as her School on Wheels tutor. April noticed Norah's willingness to help her. With April's dedication and Norah's help, my daughter's grades improved and she was recognized for her accomplishments."

Norah Lally, April's Tutor, describes her student's remarkable journey:

"...I have witnessed a beautiful change in April...With the help of the therapists at the shelter, some caring teachers, her mother's loving support, and my steady encouragement, April bravely came out of her shell and has begun to excel at a level beyond anyone's expectations."

April tells her story in her own words in an excerpt from her scholarship essay:

"Ever since I was a little girl, and for many years, my family has had some big problems. Last year when we were in the shelter, I discovered very angry feelings in me. I had the choice of moving on or staying sad and quitting. I decided that I wanted to try to move on. Whenever I was sad, I kept thinking about what I had in me. The answer is—I can do it!"

YOUNG DONORS



Sammy Tuch (age 13) presented School on Wheels with a check for \$400 from his bar mitzvah in June. A bar mitzvah project is an act of doing something to make the world better. After looking online at what School on Wheels does, he knew that it would be his project – "I highly value education, and I think what they are doing is fantastic." – Thank you Sammy. We think you are fantastic too!

Ella (age 7) and Hudson (age 5) Novie decided to donate their allowances because, as their mom told them, there are other kids who are just like them but not as fortunate. They wanted to help in any way they could. They decided a way to do that was to save their allowances. Not only did they send School on Wheels their money, they sent their saving jars too!



After learning that there are homeless children in their community who cannot even afford to buy school supplies, Kelly Washkewicz and her friend Esther (both in 7th grade) decided to have a lemonade stand over the summer vacation. They raised enough money to purchase over \$400 worth of back-to-school supplies. They are planning on continuing their effort to raise more money so that they can purchase more school supplies. Mom, Yoko Washkewicz, is as proud of the girls' efforts as we are. Thank you Kelly and Esther for all your hard work and support.

Lexie Looker has been supporting School on Wheels since she was eight years old and presented our organization to her family foundation, the Looker Foundation. Since 2008, Lexie has made it possible for our students to go on field trips to the zoo, ice skating rink, museums and aquariums. She has also given us significant donations for backpacks, school supplies and school uniforms. And as if that weren't enough, Lexie and her Mom, Tonia, volunteered at our Skid Row Learning Center, where she helped cut the ribbon at our grand opening last year. Thank you, Lexie. You are the best!





School on Wheels, Inc.
P.O. Box 23371
Ventura, CA 93002

Phone: 805.641.1678
Fax: 805.641.1686

Email: administration@schoolonwheels.org
Website: www.schoolonwheels.org

NEWS AND EVENTS

Huffington Post - The In-Between by Tutor Hanna Duff 7/26/2011

"Melissa was abandoned by her family at 12 years old, addicted to meth before entering 6th grade, and deemed "defiant" by every adult who has ever worked with her. When I first met Melissa, she was sitting at the kitchen table glaring at me."

To read Hanna's blog visit www.huffingtonpost.com/catherine-meek

NBC LA Nightly News 7/7/2011

NBC LA reporter Kim Baldonado, interviews Team Leader Janet Lang and Executive Director Catherine Meek about the Royal Visit to Skid Row on Sunday, June 10th, visit our website www.schoolonwheels.org/pages/829/ to see the interview and School on Wheels student Devan's impression of an English accent.

NBC News -5/12/2011

Education Nation: School on Wheels

Conan Nolan interviews students, tutors and Executive Director Catherine Meek about our program. The full interview can be found on our website.

4th Annual 5K Fun Run/Walk, October 23rd, 2011

Registration is now open. The first 20 participants will receive a free raffle ticket for a chance to win amazing prizes, including two round trip tickets courtesy of Southwest Airlines. Visit our website to register or find out more.

Brentwood Art Center Benefit for School on Wheels

The Center will be hosting its 40th Anniversary Student/Faculty Exhibit & Open House from Sept. 10th-12th. All proceeds from the Brentwood Art Center's commission from art sales will be donated to School on Wheels. Join us in viewing over 400 works of art from students of all ages, child through adult. There will be food, fun, art, and a drawing to win free art classes. For more information check out their website at www.brentwoodart.com/exhibits/