

For Immediate Release

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FROM SKID ROW TO SCHOLARSHIPS: HOMELESS STUDENT EARNS FULL RIDE TO UNIVERSITY

Los Angeles Homeless Teen Leaves the Streets of Skid Row with Scholarships Leading to a Brighter Future

LOS ANGELES - High school can be a trying time for many teenagers, but Los Angeles homeless teen, Yhomira Lopez has overcome obstacles that many of her peers couldn't imagine. Homeless for more than 5 years and living on the streets of Skid Row with her mother, Lopez knew that education was the key to stability and achieving her dreams. A recent high school graduate, Lopez' determination and dedication paid off as she has earned a scholarship to Stetson University in Florida.

School on Wheels, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit that provides one-on-one tutoring and educational support to thousands of homeless students from K-12th grade in southern California, always knew that Lopez had great potential from the first day she walked into its learning center on Skid Row. For quite some time, Lopez didn't tell school friends that she was homeless and hid the fact that she was living in a shelter. But with the help and support of School on Wheels, Lopez was able to keep up with her studies and maintain a 3.5 grade point average. When she's not studying, Lopez volunteers as a tutor for children at the learning center; giving back the support she had received in her time of need.

According to the American Institutes for Research more than 1.6 million children in the United States are homeless and 25 percent are from California.

After receiving a scholarship to Stetson University in Florida, Lopez was surprised with a make-over and a new laptop for college by the You-Tube Channel 'Giving Back Glam,' whose host Lilly Singh aka Superwoman is a Toronto-based entertainer who has acclaimed worldwide fame through her YouTube videos.

"I was afraid of telling kids at my school that I was homeless, because I didn't want to be judged," says Yhomira Lopez. "I knew early on that the power of an education would help me change my life," adds Lopez.

Now that she is a graduate as well as a star, Lopez, is the talk of school - she is not being judged because she is homeless, she is being celebrated because she has overcome tremendous obstacles and has earned a ticket to a brighter future.

Lopez also received additional funds from Los Angeles Unified School District as well as \$1,000 from the School on Wheels McAuley Scholarship to help her continue her education.

ABOUT SCHOOL ON WHEELS

School on Wheels, Inc. is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1993 by Agnes Stevens, a retired teacher. After reading Jonathan Kozol's *Rachel and her Children*, Agnes

realized the extent of homelessness in the USA. She began tutoring homeless kids in a park in Santa Monica, encouraging them to stay in school and participate in school activities. Today, hundreds of volunteers work one-on-one with children whose homelessness prevents them from receiving the academic stability and help they desperately need. The heart of the School on Wheels' program is the volunteer tutors who come from all backgrounds and professions, with a shared goal - to reach out to a child, to teach, to mentor, and assist in his or her educational life.

The mission of School on Wheels is to enhance educational opportunities for homeless children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The goal is to shrink the gaps in their education and provide them with the highest level of education possible. Their program serves as a consistent support system to homeless students at a time of great stress and fear. School on Wheels brings the message to homeless students that they are cared about and important. They do this by offering:

- One-on-one weekly tutoring with a volunteer
- Backpacks, school supplies and school uniforms
- A toll-free number for kids to keep in touch with us
- (800-923-1100)
- Assistance in entering school
- Help in locating lost records
- Guidance for parents in educational matters for their children
- Two Learning Centers
- Tutoring in seven major regions in Southern California, including Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

To schedule an interview with Yhomira Lopez, call Sinead Chilton.



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