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## **Foundation for California Community Colleges Awards \$2,500 to Outstanding Achievement Scholars**

### *Recipients Demonstrate Commitment to Education and Community Service*

SACRAMENTO—The Foundation for California Community Colleges has announced its first-ever Youth and Adult Services outstanding achievement scholarships. The awards, each in the amount of \$500, will be given to five community college students for their service to the community and commitment to education in the face of adversity.

The winners, who are all participants in one of five Youth and Adult Services (YAS) programs, are Ashton Pfeiffer from Los Angeles Mission College, LaWanda Baker from Los Angeles Valley College, Juanita De Jesus Vasquez from Hartnell College in Salinas, Eliseo Custodio from Santiago Canyon College in Orange, and Nicholas Carpenter from City College of San Francisco. They will be awarded the scholarships at the Foundation’s annual YAS conference in San Francisco on April 23.

“This scholarship represents our commitment to supporting students in their quest for a brighter future through the power of education,” said Paul Lanning, President and CEO of the Foundation for California Community Colleges. “Our hope is to improve student opportunities to enter the workforce and enhance learning opportunities for at-risk or disadvantaged youth and college students, one scholarship at a time.”

The scholarship recipients, who were each nominated by a program coordinator from a community college campus, represent the various YAS programs -- educational training programs that help participants pursue their academic goals, launch career paths and become active citizens. YAS programs include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-Child Development Careers (TANF-CDC), Youth Empowerment Strategies for Success–Los Angeles (YESS–LA), Youth Empowerment Strategies for Success–California (YESS–CA) and AmeriCorps programs.

“Each of the scholarship recipients has demonstrated significant ability and resolve, both in the classroom and in their daily lives,” said Lanning. “In addition to balancing their school commitments with volunteer service, full-time jobs and family obligations, these students serve as an inspiration for others in the community.”

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## About the Winners

A dedicated wife and mother of nine children, **LaWanda Baker** has succeeded in meeting her family's immediate needs while working toward financial stability and a permanent home. Since enrolling in the TANF-CDC program in September 2005 at **Los Angeles Valley College**, she has earned associate teacher and teacher permits while coping with the daily challenges and concerns of diabetes. In June, LaWanda will graduate from LA Valley College with an Associate of Arts Degree and plans to transfer to California State University at Northridge in the fall for her Bachelor's Degree in Child Development. Serving as an inspiration for others, LaWanda is dedicated to reaching her goal of teaching elementary or pre-school.

A native of Ireland, **Nicholas Carpenter** sees incredible value in giving back to the community that has embraced him since his arrival to the United States. Through the AmeriCorps program, Nicholas, who is a full-time student at **City College of San Francisco**, has served over 1,500 hours as a tutor for kindergarten and first graders at a local elementary school. Nicholas's additional volunteer efforts include Project SHINE (Students Helping In the Naturalization of Elders), a campus leadership project that helps immigrant students improve their English and learn about becoming U.S. citizens. He hopes to attend UC Berkeley this fall to pursue a degree in education and political science.

**Eliseo Custodio** moved from the Bronx to California after a difficult childhood, which included the murder of his father. Two years and six jobs after his arrival in California, Eliseo realized an education was the key to his future. He enrolled at **Santiago Canyon College's** Orange Education Center and finished his high school degree before transferring to the college's main campus, where he began working as a student volunteer for the AmeriCorps program. He now tutors students from kindergarten through sixth grade in math and reading. With the ultimate goal of operating his own group home and helping troubled teenagers turn their lives around, Eliseo is well on his way to becoming the first in his family to graduate from college.

**Ashton Pfeiffer**, an art student at **Los Angeles Mission College**, aspires to one day be an illustrator and art gallery owner. Thanks to his perseverance in the YESS-LA program, "one day" could happen sooner than he might have expected. After his father's death and displacement from various foster homes throughout his youth, Pfeiffer became dedicated to giving back to the community and helping others who have experienced situations similar to his. As a participant in the YESS-LA program, Pfeiffer now works to better the lives of other foster youth through his work as a peer mentor and volunteer. He balances his volunteer work with earning an Associate's Degree and preparing to transfer to a four-year university for his Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art. He hopes to eventually earn his Ph.D. in Arts History and Linguistics.

**Juanita De Jesus Vasquez** is a dedicated student at **Hartnell College** in Salinas who has faced numerous obstacles in her life, including the death of both her parents at an early age and immigrating to the United States when she was just 8 years old. Despite the challenges of learning a foreign language and adapting to a new country, Juanita is dedicated to her education and to serving the community. A YESS-CA participant, Juanita is preparing to earn her high school degree and later plans to attend college and major in Spanish and Pre-Law. Her ultimate goal is to help others who may be on the verge of "falling through the cracks" due to lack of education and language skills.



The Foundation for California Community Colleges is the official auxiliary to the California Community Colleges' Board of Governors, Chancellor, and System Office. The Foundation's mission is to benefit, support, and enhance the missions of the California Community College system, the largest higher education system in the nation. Incorporated in 1998, the Foundation works with Community Colleges and partner organizations to manage donations, grants, programs, and services that drive excellence in education while saving millions of dollars for colleges each year. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation and receives no direct state or public support.

For more information, about the Foundation or any of its Youth and Adult Services programs, visit [www.foundationccc.org/yas](http://www.foundationccc.org/yas).

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