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Donors hear the stories of ‘Champions of Diversity’

Submitted by SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE

The Skagit Valley College Foundation held a breakfast fundraiser Sept. 22 where attendees had the opportunity to hear the stories of past Champions of Diversity scholarship recipients.

Geraldine Garcia of Burlington began the morning recalling how, as a young girl and a native Spanish speaker, she struggled with her self-esteem, unsure if she could continue with school or not.

After moving with her family to the Skagit Valley, Garcia’s life changed dramatically. Thanks to caring faculty at Burlington-Edison High School, she regained her confidence, remained in school and graduated as valedictorian, determined to attend college.

With scholarship support from the SVC Champions of Diversity program, Geraldine is realizing her dream of attending college and speaks eloquently and passionately about her journey. She serves as a role model to her peers at SVC.

Born and raised in the Skagit Valley, Orlando Garcia of Sedro-Woolley reflected on his close-knit family and how working in his father’s trucking company helped him gain an appreciation of business and fueled his desire to attend college. It just wasn’t clear how he would pay for it.

After graduating from high school, Garcia received the “wings” he needed to begin — a Champions of Diversity scholarship. With the scholarship funds, Orlando enrolled at SVC, where he is pursuing a transfer degree. After completing his degree at SVC, he plans to attend Western Washington University. Garcia is proud to be the first in his family to attend college.

Sara Bangs (no photo available) of Mount Vernon began her path to college as a Running Start student at SVC. Early on, she joined the college’s Calling All Colors student club to get acquainted with the campus and to meet new people. The group introduced Bangs to fellow students from around the globe and enabled her to participate in community-minded activities and projects.

Calling All Colors also helped Bangs solidify her passion for language, culture and history. She graduated from SVC and transferred to Western Washington University, where she majored in Spanish and creative writing, and minored in ancient Greek.

Last month’s breakfast fundraiser raised more than \$22,000 to support scholarships. Scholarship amounts from all participating colleges and universities typically range from \$1,000 to \$4,000. Last year, one student received a \$22,300 Champions of Diversity scholarship from Western Washington University.

The SVC program honors local high school students who have contributed to diversity on their campuses and in their communities. Now in its 11th year, the program has recognized more than 500 students and raised more than \$167,000.

A new endowment, the Dave Quall Champions Scholarship Fund, has been established to support Champions of Diversity scholarships. The fund is named after retired state legislator Dave Quall of Mount Vernon, who was a leader on education issues.



Geraldine Garcia



Orlando Garcia

Learn more

To learn more about the Champions of Diversity program, visit www.skagit.edu/champions. To see interviews from the breakfast fundraiser, visit www.kvos.com and click on "More NewsView Minute," then "NewsView Champions of Diversity."