



2010 Phoenix Education Grants

Seven Students Receive Scholarships

BY MAUREEN KALIL

The following college students were recently awarded Phoenix Education Grants (PEGs) to assist them in continuing their education. The Phoenix Society scholarships are awarded annually to deserving burn survivors who are attending college or technical school.

CODY BLAND

“Grants such as this one help those who want to go to college and make the most of the life they are given,” says Cody Bland.



The student at the University of Nebraska, Kearney (UNK) has been making the most of his life for years. “As a child, I kept on going,” says Cody. “The scars never stopped me. I played, laughed, and, even in hard times, stood strong. As I became older I never skipped a beat either. I played sports, was in numerous organization and clubs, and was a good role model for the youth of our school.”

Cody admits to being scared initially to leave the “comfort zone” of his small town in central Nebraska, but describes going to UNK as the “best experience ever.” Cody is currently studying criminal justice and sociology and is considering a career in state law enforcement.

“I want to help people, giving something back to the community that I not only live in, but that has supported me through my hard times. I hope to work with youth and keep kids on the right track,” he says.

LINDSAY NORCROSS

It is from her 5-year-old daughter Emma, who is also a burn survivor, that Lindsay Norcross finds the inspiration to complete



her nursing studies at Savannah Technical College. “Emma deserves the best life that I can provide for her,” explains Lindsay, “and in order to do so I must complete my degree.” The single mother of two daughters has pursued her degree while providing extensive postdischarge care for Emma, and maintaining her own rehab schedule.

“It is my goal, through the completion of my nursing degree,” explains Lindsay, “to add my name to the many nurses serving at burn hospitals throughout the world.”

Lindsay describes the impact that the nurses who treated her at Joseph M. Still Burn Center in Augusta, Georgia, in the summer of 2009 had on her plans. “It was at that time that I began to feel the pull on my heart to, in some way, contribute to this phenomenon—the radical movement of nursing with love! It was almost as if these nurses’ love, compassion, and selflessness had been bonded to me just as my skin grafts had bonded to me, and I could not suppress the drive to become one of them.”

GENEVIEVE PAULIN-PITRE

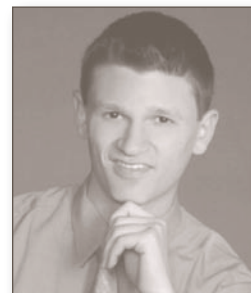
To live a life that has meaning—that’s the goal of Genevieve Paulin-Pitre. The graduate student at the Université du Québec a Trois Rivières plans on becoming a psychologist. “My future plans,” says Genevieve, “are not to change the world. I only want to plant seeds of happiness, starting by planting some in my life and then into the life of others.”



Genevieve, who earned a bachelors degree at the University of Moncton in New Brunswick, Canada, is now in her second year of a doctoral program, where she is researching the effects of adding creativity (such as drawing or painting) to therapy for adults who are suffering from psychological trauma.

Throughout high school and college, Genevieve committed herself not only to excelling academically, but also to being active in her community, for which she received numerous awards. She has volunteered for community events and at local hospitals, organized a fundraiser for tsunami victims, served as co-president of the Green Committee at her university, and volunteered for New Brunswick’s Green Party. While Genevieve regrets that the demands of her studies are currently limiting her volunteer efforts, she plans to resume them after graduation.

PETER RONDEAU



Peter Rondeau says that he follows a few simple guidelines in living his life: (1) not to feel sorry for himself about anything, (2) to do the things that make him happy, and (3) to be as successful as possible with anything he tries. Injured as a toddler, Peter says he never let the “limitations” of his burn injury hold him back, saying “to be

honest, I never really paid too much attention or even realized I had them.” He credits his parents with encouraging him to participate in sports and other activities. In high school, he says, he embraced all his high school had to offer, not only participating in 3 sports and many other clubs, but also serving as captain of the golf, tennis, and swimming teams and winning numerous awards. The University of Massachusetts Amherst freshman says that says his goal is to “get the best education possible and give back to the community.”

“Someday I hope to be able to give back to the city that has given me so much,” says Peter of his hometown of Lynn, Massachusetts.

RACHEL SANDLER

Rachel Sandler describes herself as “having a passion for helping children and adolescents better their lives and become successful adults.” Since graduating high school, Rachel has worked with students with developmental disabilities, at a shelter



for at-risk youth, and in an adolescent inpatient psychiatric unit. Rachel is currently a family-based case manager providing therapeutic services to at-risk children and youth and their families, a job she describes as “very rewarding.” However, earning a masters degree in secondary school education and licensure as a professional counselor, she explains, will enable her to “work

with children and adolescents on a more long-term basis in order to build relationships and be a stable influence in their lives.”

Rachel has recently volunteered in a program designed to help underprivileged girls build self-esteem and promote exercise, serving as a running buddy and role model. She is also a Phoenix Society SOAR (Survivors Offering Assistance in Recover) peer supporter.

“I am currently satisfying some of my life goals through my employment and volunteer experience,” says the graduate student at Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, “however, completion of this degree will allow me to further my scope and touch many more individuals’ lives.”

REBECCA UKAEGBU

“Every time I think about college, I think about all the doors that it will open to me,” said Rebecca Ukaegbu as she looked forward to attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



Rachel describes herself as a “key player” at Lexington High School in Lexington, Massachusetts, where she took honors and AP classes, joined the student government, worked on school plays as part of the tech crew, sang in an a cappella group and the school choir, founded a school magazine, and served on the teen advisory board of

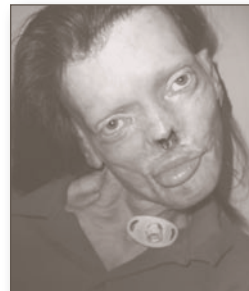
her local library. Rachel credits these high school experiences with preparing her to meet with confidence the challenges that she will face as she pursues her postsecondary education.

Rebecca began her studies at UMass Amherst this fall as a pre-med student. “My interest in medicine stems from the fact that I have spent a good deal of time in hospitals as a patient,” explains Rebecca.

“If I work hard for the next 8 years and succeed, I can see myself as a doctor working in a hospital,” she adds. “That is my final goal and although my undergraduate years will just be the beginning of what will be a long journey, I know that it will be a very important junction of my life.”

KURTIS WILDER

When Kurtis Wilder’s burn injury made it impossible for him to return to his previous employment as an auto mechanic, he turned to his longtime interest in computers and art for a second career. Just 7 months after his discharge from UC Davis Burn



Center in Sacramento, California, Kurtis, who had been hospitalized for 9 months, enrolled in the Art Institute of Pittsburgh’s Online Division. For the last 3 years while undergoing various reconstructive surgeries, he has also been busy working toward a degree in media arts and animation.

The father of two is looking forward to a successful career that will give him the ability to support his children, pay his outstanding school bills, fund additional reconstruction surgeries, and eventually give back to the Phoenix Society’s PEG program.

THE FUTURE OF PEG

“Paying it forward is an important component of PEG,” says Barbara Kammerer Quayle, who founded the program, which has helped 48 students and awarded 57 grants since its inception in 2002. “We are delighted to have been able to assist dozens of burn survivors pursue their education with this program and we are hoping that as they become established in their chosen careers, they will also give back to PEG. Contributions to the PEG Endowment Fund are crucial in ensuring that this valuable resource for burn survivors will be available for years to come.”

To make a PEG contribution, contact the Phoenix Society office at 800-888-2876 or donate via the Society website <www.phoenix-society.org/waystogive/donations/>. (Be sure to select “PEG” as “type of gift” on the online form.) ■