



2007 PEG Scholarships Awarded

Ten burn survivors were recently chosen as recipients of the 2007-2008 Phoenix Education Grant (PEG) scholarships. Selection criteria included academic ability, response to essay questions, reference letters, and financial need. This Phoenix Society program has awarded 42 grants to 37 students since 2002 to assist them in pursuing postsecondary education.



Mary Bock, of Livonia, New York, is attending the State University of New York at Geneseo as a freshman this fall. A Spanish major, Mary hopes to use her proficiency in the language as an asset in a career in law enforcement or business. An honor student in high school, Mary was active in numerous activities, including the school newspaper, where she served as sports editor and, in her senior year, as editor in chief. She has been a dedicated church and community volunteer. A recipient of New York State's Triple C Award, which honors students who show exceptional courage, character, and commitment, Mary explained that through living with physical differences she has developed an inner strength that has made her very determined, strong willed, self-confident, and able to reach any goals for which she is aiming. Mary was designated as the recipient of this year's Neta Cesped Memorial PEG scholarship



Melissa (Missy) Cebula, of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, is a sophomore this fall at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC), where she is pursuing a nursing degree. Missy was drawn to the field of nursing during her first year as a camper at Cheley/Children's Hospital Burn Camp in Colorado. Missy recalled, "I knew I wanted to help others who shared my experiences but it wasn't until that summer and talking with the nurses who took part in burn camp that I realized that's what I wanted to do with my life." Missy, a dedicated student, earned a certificate for academic achievement during her first year at UWEC, while also working on the housing and residence hall staff. Missy hopes that as a nurse she can "not only help others heal physically but emotionally as well." Recalling the profound impact the encouraging words of another burn survivor had on her recovery, Missy said, "I want to be this person for not just one, but as many people as I can, because who better to tell you that you're going to be ok, than someone who has also shared your experience."

William (Billy) James Dahmen, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, began classes this fall at Louisiana State University, after completing 2 years at Durham



Technical Community College in Durham, NC. Billy's immediate plan is to earn a bachelor of science degree in geology, but ultimately he would like to earn advanced degrees that focus on planetary geology and to work for NASA. Billy

is another PEG scholar who credits burn camp with having a significant impact on his life. Billy, who first attended burn camp in 1995 at age 11, said, "I believe that the friendships and knowledge that I gained at burn camp had such an instrumental role in my recovery, that as soon as I turned 16, I became a volunteer counselor at San Diego's Camp beyond the Scars." In 1996 Billy represented that camp at the International Association of Firefighters National Burn Camp in Washington, DC. Billy has continued his involvement in the burn community, recently helping to organize a local burn support group. "I am so fortunate to have the opportunity to get an education," said Billy, "and I'm ready to make a difference in my own life and the lives of others."



Esther Ferris of Modesto, California, a 2006 PEG recipient, was awarded her second PEG this year to help her achieve her goal of earning a bachelors degree in child development and business administration from

California State University, Stanislaus. Esther has worked with children for more than 15 years and loves "being able to make a difference in little ones' lives." Since enrolling at the university in 2005, Esther has also worked part-time as the administrative intern and special projects coordinator at the child development center on campus. She has also been an enthusiastic volunteer for both the Stanislaus Association for the Education of Young Children., where she is the membership chair and a member of the board, and her church, where she has worked with outreach, fundraising, and children. Following completion of her degree, Esther hopes to be able to "offer quality child care for parents who like me would to be home caring for their children, but must leave them in the trust and care of others while they work." She is also interested in developing "after school programs that encourage

lifelong learning, self-esteem, and caring for others in children."

"Children are our future and what we teach them will determine the type of world that we will live in tomorrow," explained Esther.



Christine Gilyard, of Clear Lake, MN, began work toward a graduate certificate in marriage and family therapy (MFT) this fall at St. Cloud State University. Christine is a burn support representative at Regions

Hospital Burn Center in St. Paul, where she offers support, coaching, and education to burn survivors and their families. She is an active member of both the American Burn Association , where she has served on the Ethics Committee and as chair of the Burn Survivor Support Special Interest Group, and the Phoenix Society, where she is a member of the advisory board. Through the MFT program, Christine hopes to gain a greater understanding of family relationships, dynamics, and therapeutic interventions, which will help her in her work with burn survivors and their families. After completing this program, Christine also hopes to continue her education in trauma psychology and extend that knowledge into burn trauma.



Mark McCormick, of Timken, Kansas, started his junior year this fall at Fort Hays State University where he is studying biology, the first step in a plan that he hopes will ultimately lead to a career in physical therapy and the

opportunity to treat burn survivors. Mark, a long-time camper and participant in many of the programs offered by The Cheley/Childrens Hospital Burn Camp, was also selected to represent it at the International Association of Firefighters National Children's Burn Camp. He has returned to the Colorado camp as a volunteer counselor as well. During Mark's freshman and sophomore years at Barton Community College, he served as a student athletic trainer. Currently, in addition to being a student, Mark works in a hospital as a rehabilitation

aide. Mark says he often shares his experience as a burn survivor to motivate his patients and credits that experience with making him more compassionate.



Jenny McMahon, of Redding, California, is a freshman this fall at Biola University, where she is majoring in intercultural studies. "I hope to find a way to make a career out of closing the gap in Third World countries in terms of economics, health care, or infrastructure," explained Jenny. But Jenny isn't waiting to complete her degree before trying to make a difference. In summer 2004 she traveled with a team of girls to help children in schools and orphanages and in 2006 she helped rebuild a hurricane-damaged home in Panama. She has been active in her own community as well, where she has volunteered for her church, the Red Cross, and a horse rescue program. "By enriching the lives of others," said Jenny, "my own life is enriched as well."



LaShanita Mitchell, of Little Rock, Arkansas, is a freshman at Bethune-Cookman College this fall, where she plans to earn a degree in nursing. Her ultimate goal is to become a physical therapist. LaShanita was an active high school student who participated in student council, her school's dance program, yearbook staff, and varsity volleyball, where she served as a co-captain. In addition to volunteering in her community as part of her student council activities, she also helped out at an elementary school, assisting teachers and tutoring students. She also volunteers with Dress for Success, a program that helps disadvantaged women with career entry skills. LaShanita credits her participation in Upward Bound, a counseling, support, and enrichment program for high school students, with having an impact in her life.

"After I finish school, I would like the opportunity to pay it forward and help others in my community just as this community has done for me," said LaShanita.



Tashanita Mitchell, is joining her twin, LaShanita, at Bethune Cookman College this fall, where she also plans to major in nursing. Like her twin, in high school Tashanita participated in student council and volleyball, where she served as co-captain with LaShanita, and worked as a community volunteer. She too credits Upward Bound with helping her develop both academic and social skills. After earning her bachelors degree, she also plans to enter graduate school and study physical therapy. "With my education," said Tashanita, "I may not change the world, but I will definitely make a difference in someone's life."



Graciela (Gracie) Nobles, of Phoenix, Arizona, began her sophomore year at Arizona State University this fall, where she is an education student. As a high school student she excelled academically and was active in choir, yearbook, and cross country. She has been a dedicated community volunteer and active in her church. She has not only attended the Arizona Children's Burn Camp, but returned as a counselor in training, and has spoken to raise support for the Foundation for Burns and Trauma. She has also served as a panelist at World Burn Congress.

Graciela, who was born in Bolivia, said, "I was brought to America to find healing for my burns but what I found after the healing and surgeries was to live life to the fullest and to use my life to bring hope to a world that at times feels hopeless." Graciela hopes to go back to "her roots" and "travel to places to educate the children of the world."

ABOUT THE PEG PROGRAM

Information on applying for a PEG scholarship can be found on the Society's website, www.phoenix-society.org, under "Phoenix Programs."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Phoenix Society continues to work toward building a \$200,000 PEG endowment to fund these scholarships. To learn how you can contribute to the endowment, contact the Society office at 800-888-2876. One hundred percent of donations to the PEG endowment will enable expansion of scholarship opportunities.

PEG SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED IN MEMORY OF NETA CESPED

Friends and family of Neta Cesped, the late wife of burn survivor George Cesped, funded a 2007 PEG scholarship in her memory. Neta, who passed away in March, had spent much of the last 30 years since her husband's injury, devoted to helping burn survivors.

"She had such passion and compassion when helping people with burn injuries," explained PEG founder Barbara Quayle, "that her family wanted to offer a scholarship to honor her memory."

College freshman Mary Bock (see PEG article) was selected as the recipient of the Neta Cesped Memorial PEG scholarship. Mary was selected based on the merits of her application. She is also a resident of New York State, which coincidentally was where Neta Cesped first lived when she moved to the United States from her native Australia.



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