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## Student Spotlight

June 2018

**Isabella and Robert Valdes**

**Monsignor Edward Pace High School, Immaculate Conception Catholic School  
Hialeah, FL**



Miracles happen every day - and for the Belinda Valdes, one of those miracles was the day she was awarded AAA Scholarships for her two children, Isabella and Robert.

The Valdes family is passionate about giving back to their community. Even at a young age, Belinda wanted her children to know the importance of helping those in need, because you never know if one day you'll be the one in need. So, every Sunday, Belinda, her husband Roberto, and their two children, Isabella and Robert, wake up at 5:00 A.M to make sandwiches and hand them out to people around their community. This is just one example of their kindness and thoughtfulness. The Valdes family is known for always lending a hand.

On April 20, 2016, Belinda went about her day like any other. To her disbelief, this would be the day that would change her life forever. That night, her husband and children were fast asleep when Belinda decided to take a shower before heading to bed. Before she could step into the shower, she suddenly felt dizzy and had an excruciating pain in her right eye. She knew something serious was happening and immediately yelled for her husband. Roberto awoke in a panic and rushed his wife to the hospital. It was there Belinda found out she was having a brain aneurysm.

Goodbyes are tricky. When you tell a loved one goodbye, it is usually with the intention of seeing them again. However, when Belinda was told to call her loved ones and give them her final goodbye, she wasn't sure how to react. Was this really goodbye? She was feeling fine hours ago? The doctor's words were beginning to blur together. According to her doctor, Belinda was experiencing a severe brain aneurysm and would most likely not make it out of surgery alive, and in the slight chance that she did, she would be in a coma for three months. There was so much to take into consideration – the most important being her 7-year-old and a 15-year-old waiting for her patiently at home. She needed to take care of them; she needed to watch them grow. There were still so many things Belinda wanted to do, places to see, people to help. But she needed this surgery, and regardless of the outcome, she knew in her heart that everything would be ok. She gave her children one final call, and her husband one last kiss, and was wheeled to the operating room.

When Belinda woke up 12 hours later, she was certain her face matched the same surprised expression on the nurse's face standing beside her. The nurse asked her a set of questions – what's your name, what's the color of this blanket, etc. Belinda could answer all of them without hesitation. It was a true miracle, one most people never witness. Belinda had defied all odds, and continued to do so when she left the hospital after only 11 days instead of the required 2-3 months. As Belinda began to settle in at home, she spent the majority of her time with her children asking them questions such as were they getting enough sleep, did they have any homework that they needed to finish, etc. Belinda couldn't help but cry when they told her that they hadn't slept for 11 days - the entire time she was in the hospital, and that Isabella had tried her best to keep up with the bills and chores around the house. Robert then grabbed his mom's hand and asked, "How are we going to afford school?" It was such a simple question, but Belinda couldn't find the words. With her being in recovery and her husband currently unemployed, there was no possible way they'd be able to continue to send their children to the private schools they were already attending. Belinda desperately wanted to be strong for her children, but it seemed as if her luck was running out. That is, until she was approached by one of her friends who asked her how everything was going post-surgery. When Belinda informed her about the financial struggles their family was currently facing, the woman smiled and said "have you heard about the AAA Scholarship Foundation? You should apply and see if you qualify." Belinda applied and when she received the news that they qualified, she broke down in tears.

"I have tears in my eyes because of your organization helping me and my family," says Belinda Valdes. "Thank you for giving us this opportunity."

Now in 2018, Belinda can watch her children thrive academically from the front row. Being a part of the AAA Scholarship Foundation has only motivated Isabella and Robert to do the best they possibly can in school, and to never take their education for granted. "I tell them every day that whatever they choose to do in life, you must always remember who helped you," says Belinda. At 17-years-old, Isabella is in all Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes, and her love for helping others inspired her to plan to pursue medicine after high school in hopes of becoming a pediatrician. Isabella doesn't want to go into the medical field for the money, but to be able to travel the world and help children and families that do not have access to medicine. At 10-years-old, Robert may be tiny but he has big dreams, such as becoming President of the United States one day! "I want to give back to AAA someday," says Robert Valdes. "I was really young when my mom had to have surgery, and I didn't know how we were going to be able to afford school. I now appreciate everything that AAA has given us, and hope someday I can help people just like they helped me."

Fighting back her emotions, Belinda cannot express enough how grateful she is for the AAA Scholarship Foundation, and how life-changing it was for her family. “I don’t have the words,” she says. “Thank you for helping me put my children through school. You don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow, and you have to make the most of each day. I am very thankful for everyone that makes this organization possible.”

### **About AAA Scholarship Foundation**

The AAA Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships solely to qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 85 percent of AAA scholarships are distributed to children at or below 185 percent of poverty. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and are concerned about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child’s learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit scholarship organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students through these tax credit scholarship programs in multiple states. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit [www.AAAScholarships.org](http://www.AAAScholarships.org), or contact Kerri Vaughan at [kerri@aaascholarships.org](mailto:kerri@aaascholarships.org) or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.