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Student Spotlight

Carlos Casillas, Andres Casillas, Jocelyn Ambriz
New Horizons Academy High School, Cornerstone Christian Academy
Las Vegas, NV



“I always tell my children how lucky they are to receive the AAA Scholarship,” says Linda Ambriz-Carranza. “If it wasn’t for the generous donors, they wouldn’t be able to attend the school of their choice. I tell them every day - make whoever is paying, whomever they may be, make them feel as proud as you make me feel.”

A few years ago, Linda, a single mother of two incredible boys, Andres and Carlos, decided to move from California to Nevada. Linda worked as a pre-school director, and coming from an education background, it was very important to her that her children attend a school where they felt comfortable and confident, especially since Nevada was unfamiliar territory to them. She learned early on that there was a small pool of schools to choose for her children in Nevada, which made the decision process a bit more difficult. Her oldest son, Carlos, was in the third grade at the time. Carlos has always been a diligent student, which is why Linda was even more surprised when she learned that his grades had dropped tremendously, resulting in him needing to repeat the third grade.

Linda racked her brain as to what could have caused this, and came to the revelation that the separation between her and her children’s father had more of an affect on her children than they let on. Linda was so focused on trying to be two parental figures, she hadn’t stopped to think about the emotional distress their separation had caused her children, especially Carlos. When Linda sat Carlos down and explained to him that the school recommended he repeat the third grade, she could see a shift in his overall demeanor. This only motivated Linda to find a school that would give her son his confidence back. Linda went on tour after tour, attended meeting after meeting, but each school had the same common denominator: too expensive. Linda simply

couldn't afford one school tuition, let alone two. It was a tough decision, but Linda decided to enroll her children in a smaller, less expensive school given their financial situation.

The boys seemed to be adapting well to their new school. Carlos' grades were slowly improving, and Andres was working hard to maintain his grades as well. Because Carlos was older, he was able to take advantage of the extracurricular activities, specifically baseball. However, it took a turn for the worse when Linda was informed that Carlos had been bullied by his teammates during an away game. Linda had zero tolerance for bullying, and immediately pulled Carlos out of that school, which meant she also had to pull out Andres. Linda was put in a difficult situation. She desperately wanted her boys to attend the same school, but couldn't seem to find one that would work for the both of them. On top of this, it was March and the school year was halfway over, which meant not many schools would take her two boys. Linda brought Andres and Carlos to the school she worked at, and expressed her concerns to a fellow administrator. The administrator replied, "Why don't you enroll your children here? We will gladly take them." Ecstatic, Linda was quickly reminded of the one thing that always seemed to hold her back: money. But when she looked into her children's eyes, she was reminded of all the hurt and pain they had suffered in the past few months, even years. So, Linda got to work.

Linda researched every scholarship program available and applied to all of them. She received countless no's, but never gave up. There was a moment when Linda was alone in her car, hoping that good news would soon come her way. She got out of her car and walked to the mailbox where she had an envelope waiting from the AAA Scholarship Foundation. She jumped up and down with glee for her family had qualified!

So much has happened since receiving the AAA Scholarship. Linda remarried, and brought a beautiful girl into the world named Jocelyn. Jocelyn attends Cornerstone Christian Academy alongside her brother, Andres. There, the two excel. Jocelyn is reading above her grade level, while Andres has joined student council and the flag football team. He also loves math and art class. Carlos graduated high school from New Horizons Academy a year early and was even accepted into the University of Nevada, Las Vegas! Prior to graduating, Carlos was school president, played on the basketball and soccer team, and in his spare time would help mentor students with learning disabilities. Linda can't believe what her children have accomplished, and can't express enough how proud she is of each of them.

As Carlos was preparing for graduation, Linda said to him "I wish you didn't have to face the challenges you did growing up." Instead of agreeing, Carlos said "maybe all of that had to happen to me, to our family, to make me work harder and never let anything stop me. I deserved to finish." Carlos, as well as Andres and Jocelyn, are aware of all the sacrifices their mom has had to make to send them to the school of their choice. That is exactly why they take it upon themselves to work as hard as they possibly can, and prove to not only their mother, but to the donors of the AAA Scholarship Foundation that their donations are making a difference.

"I can never thank the AAA Scholarship Foundation enough," says Linda Ambriz-Carranza. "We are extremely thankful for everyone at this organization."

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, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.