

Meet the 2019 Scholarship Recipients

by Jeannine Hagedorn, Director for Scholarships

The Scholarship Committee selected Avorie Anderson as the first 2019 Blanche and John Rebar Scholarship recipients. Avorie was the first candidate that we interviewed and she truly lit up the room and immediately impressed us. She is a very poised and well-spoken high school senior with a laser focused vision of becoming a pilot. As a high school student, she has been enrolled in Aeronautical Sciences for three years at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the university she has been admitted to and will attend for her degree, maintaining a 4.0 in her classes there. She is also dually enrolled at Florida Southwestern getting some of her prerequisite classes out of the way. All of this while working at a veterinary clinic. She doesn't just set goals for herself, she sets out to attain goals that have never been achieved by anyone. She maintains a 4.9 GPA and a ranking of 21 out of 379 in her class. Her grades and accomplishments speak for her but when you meet her you will be taken with her warm personality and great attitude that will help her accomplish all her lofty goals she will surely achieve.

The recipient of the second Blanche and John Rebar Scholarship is Rebecca Paul. She is graduating in May with her high school diploma and a dental certificate from Lorenzo Walker. She has also been dually enrolled in Florida Southwestern and will obtain her AA in General Studies at the same time she graduates high school! Her GPA is 3.91 and she maintains a class ranking of 6 out of 145. She did that while volunteering at Grace Place for Children & Families, where she was in the Academy of Leaders Program, and the Golisano Children's Museum of Naples. She has been accepted to the University of Florida dental school and has dreams of becoming an orthodontist.

Our first named scholarship of the Local Scholarship Fund honors Carolyn Willis. Carolyn Willis was born into a family who valued education. When her father earned his law degree he put his degree in his baby daughter's crib and said, "These are the two things of which I am most proud!" Her mother taught high school English and French – until she was married – at that time in history she was no longer allowed to teach. Her mother sought the company of educated women, so she started an AAUW branch in her town. Carolyn said her mother paid for her first membership and she, Carolyn, has continued her membership to the present day. She joined the AAUW when she moved to Naples, and was instrumental in developing the first STEM conference with Sally Lam. At that time Carolyn was working at the Edison Community College so that was where

the early conferences were held. Next, Carolyn was elected President of our AAUW Branch from 1994—1996. She continued to be active in STEM, sharing her knowledge, doing publicity and some writing. Carolyn has always encouraged her daughters and girls and women to get an education. And she thinks the AAUW scholarships are wonderful ways to pass on her heritage and to support promising women.

The recipient of the Carolyn Willis Scholarship is Christina Harding Cruz. We are awarding Christina for a second year. She was a recipient last year and we love her. Those who attended the January meeting, were able to hear Christina tell us her story. Christina attained a degree in social work from FGCU and is now pursuing a Masters in Social work at UCF. Raised in Immokalee, she works as a life coach at PACE center for girls touching the lives of young women with her own story of overcoming adversity. She lives a life of service to her community and we are proud to support her.

Our second named scholarship of the Local Scholarship Fund honors another member, Florence Chandler. Florence epitomizes the successful woman who returned to school to finish her college education and advanced degree. Florence is smart, demanding of herself and others, compassionate, a patient listener, good humored and the one who cuts to the chase with a pithy, insightful statement. Her commitment to women's rights is unparalleled — she has mentored and coached, marched, testified, petitioned, called and cajoled. She is particularly adamant that AAUW continue its 20 plus year tradition of providing scholarships to women 21 and older who, like herself, returned to college. Having a scholarship in the name of Florence Chandler is one small way we can recognize her contributions.

The Florence Chandler Scholarship was awarded to Zoey Smith. Zoey works as a Physics teaching assistant while attending FGCU for Bachelor's in Biology and would like to pursue a career in the medical field. She expects to graduate in May 2020. Zoey's mom is French and her Dad is American making her bilingual. Her parents reside in France and she made the brave decision to return to the U.S. to pursue her passion for medicine. Her GPA is 3.9 and she is dedicated to educating people about making healthy choices.

The first of our three Local Scholarship awards for this year was given to Ashley Forrest. Ashley is an educator teaching 7th grade civics at Oakridge middle school that has set her sights on becoming a Principal. She received her B.S. in Political

Science at UCF and is currently pursuing a Master's in Educational Leadership with a 4.0 GPA and anticipated graduation of August 2020. She has made herself an invaluable member of her team frequently being left at the helm when her Principal is out. It's not very often a teacher applies for our scholarship and we are pleased to make an award to an educator that will surely touch the lives of many.

Maria Lopez Whitney is another recipient of a Local Scholarship Award. Maria has worked as a certified nursing assistant, received her Bachelor's from FGCU and is currently enrolled in the Physician Assistant's program there. She maintains a 3.96 GPA and the recommendation letters from her professors tell the story of a caring medical student that our community will be lucky to have.

The remaining Local Scholarship was awarded to Adele Ramirez. Adele has worked in home health care and is a certified nursing assistant. Adele is attending Hodges University to attain a Bachelor's of Nursing, maintaining a 4.0 GPA and consistently making the Dean's List. Adele's recommendation letters give glowing reviews of her work ethic and professionalism and we are happy to assist her in the home stretch as she anticipates graduating in December 2019. Her future patients will be lucky to receive care from such a warm and caring nurse.

Please join me in congratulating our 2019 Scholarship Recipients!