

Ana Garcia 8th Grader at Santa Ana’s Villa Fundamental Intermediate wins \$500 college scholarship in the “Save Me a Spot in College” Contest sponsored by the Campaign for College Opportunity



Most 8th grade students are looking for great role models to motivate and encourage them. Ana Garcia is one. An 8th grader at Villa Fundamental Intermediate, Ana Garcia feels it is her job to be a good example to her siblings and her classmates. In addition to attending to her own school work, she tutors her younger siblings. Ana will be the first in her family to attend college. She hopes that both her younger sister and brother will join her.

She recently won a \$500 scholarship in the statewide “Save Me a Spot in College” youth scholarship contest along with her friends Jasmin Cervantes and Alailha Murillo for their ‘tv ad’ entry. The contest, which received over 12,000 entries, awarded scholarships to 200 middle and high school students around the state in three categories: written word, poster, and tv ad.

An ever increasing number of California’s young people are the first in their families to go to college – they face significant challenges that they must overcome in order to reach college. These challenges contain both the pragmatic problem of figuring out how to get there and get financial aid and the equally critical issue – to believe that it is possible.

This is one reason why advocates and policymakers want lawmakers to pass SB 890 Early Commitment to College this year. The strategy of SB 890 is powerful and unique because it packages college and financial aid opportunities into one commitment made to students at an early age – starting in the 6th grade. This means students like Ana Garcia will learn early about their college opportunities. California already invests in an open-access community college system, excellent public universities, and generous many financial aid programs. This bill leverages these investments to motivate students.

Ana hopes to become a doctor or nurse someday and strives to help her community. While she faces financial barriers, Ana is still confident that she will be the first in her family to successfully graduate with a degree. While in college, she would like to participate in community service activities, clubs, and play sports (basketball, volleyball or soccer). Not only will she be helping her community with her career choice, but she plans on educating and informing other students about college so they too can experience the opportunities presented by attaining a higher education.

Ana has already taken good advantage of the educational opportunities at her intermediate school. She is currently taking honor courses to help prepare her for the future demands of college and is a member of the AVID and the Math Engineering and Science Academy (MESA). AVID and MESA are both academic enrichment programs that help prepare educationally disadvantaged students for college as well as their future careers.

The “Save Me a Spot in College” Scholarship Contest is made possible in part because of the generosity of funders such as the College Access Foundation of California and the McConnell Foundation.