

New World School of the Arts Pioneers 'Posse Foundation Scholars' for Ivy League Universities

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By New World School of the Arts

MIAMI, -- /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- For the first time since its inception in 1989, and thanks to a personal appeal made in 2009 by Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Mr. Alberto M. Carvalho, the Posse Foundation began recruiting in South Florida. The non-profit organization grants full scholarships based on multiculturalism through partnerships with top-tier private colleges and universities in 17 states. As a result, two of New World School of the Arts (NWSA) graduating seniors, have been granted a free pass to some of the nation's most elite universities; proving that an education centered around the arts helps students become more socially and intellectually prepared for college, and are more appealing to recruiters.

"The training in the arts offers students a different perspective to problem solving. Research shows that student thinking is not linear and incorporates the more creative side of the brain," explained Dr. Frederic Conde, principal of New World School of the Arts. Come this fall, Gregory Almonord and Sabrina Debrosse, both visual art students of Haitian descent, will begin their post-secondary training with the goals of becoming a heart surgeon and a foreign affairs diplomat, respectively.

The two New World School of the Arts Posse scholarship recipients, selected alongside 28 others from a group of 800 countywide nominees, have already commenced bonding, training and consolidating leadership skills through the program's pre-collegiate sessions occurring weekly. Three Miami-Dade Posse groups of 10 members each will attend the University of Pennsylvania, Hamilton College and Mount Holyoke College, all with scholarships worth up to \$200,000 each. "It's an incredible network, and I think my life now can be a great success story," said Mr. Almonord, ranked 6th in his NWSA 2010 graduating class. He excitedly recalls picking up his mother and jumping up and down with her, as both their eyes filled with tears when they heard the news of his Posse selection. "She knows that I'm going to do what I have to do to make this work," remarked Almonord of this life changing opportunity.

The Foundation's track-record demonstrates that underrepresented, high-achieving, self-motivating students will remain in college through graduation, at higher rates, if they can share the process with members of their own group. In other words, a posse that stays together succeeds together. Posse scholars boast a 90% graduation rate, compared to the 57% national standard rate. This means that successful completion of an undergraduate program not only improves for applicants of multicultural backgrounds but also for other ethnicities or races,

including Caucasians, despite the institution's cultural composition. Students that can rely on ready-made support groups report feeling a higher sense of worth.

Miami-Dade nominees were identified by counselors and principals of public high schools, with attention to diversity, leadership and high academic standards. The selection process was arduous, according to Ms. Debrosse, who emerged as a team leader through a project building process which included writing Public Service Announcements. She was able to guide the group thanks to the value other students placed on her arts background, backed by NWSA's sterling reputation. "They knew about its national ranking," she indicated.

The students' parents never attended college but all placed great importance on schooling. Both faced financial obstacles in attending university and named their mothers as the single-most influence in their lives. Ms. Debrosse, one of 9 siblings, for years cared for a bedridden grandmother. "I think the transition for me would be so hard, I might not have stayed," referring to the challenges of living away from family, or the support of her Posse. "Both would be as successful, but they would've struggled financially. They may have had to work to get through school, which could have an impact on their drive and ability complete the program" added Dr. Conde about this unique opportunity. "I have to do well. Ivy League is such a myth" expressed Mr. Almonord, and one which the Posse Foundation hopes to turn into reality for up to 6,000 students by 2020.

A Florida center of excellence in visual and performing arts, NWSA provides a comprehensive program of artistic, creative and academic development through a curriculum that reflects the rich multicultural state of Florida. With programs accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art, Dance, Music and Theater, NWSA offers four-year BFA and BM college degrees, and the high school diploma. Through its rigorous curriculum and conservatory-style teaching NWSA empowers its students to become leaders in the arts. New World School of the Arts was created by the Florida Legislature in 1984 as a center of excellence in the performing and visual arts. It is an educational partnership of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami Dade College and the University of Florida.