

FOUNDATION FOCUS

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FOUNDATION NEWS

FALL | 2021

Presidential Scholars Program:

*DELIBERATE ACTION
DISMANTLED BARRIERS
DREAMS REALIZED* [P.12](#)

ALSO INSIDE

A Heart for Scholars

*HONORING THE ORGAN DONOR
WHO SAVED MY LIFE* [P.17](#)

Cameroon Connection

*SISTERS AID AFRICAN REFUGEES,
HONOR PARENTS' LEGACY* [P.18](#)



Steve McAuliffe

“In the midst of incredible obstacles, this community inspired us ...”



It seems unimaginable that almost 20 years have passed since I first joined the Montgomery College Foundation’s Board of Directors. During this time, I have had the distinct pleasure of learning from the previous chairs, each of whom brought something unique to this role. I thank Ken Cook, the late Tom Ladd, Doug Firstenberg, Marty Colburn, and Ken Becker for setting such a high bar for me and future board chairs to follow.

As Foundation directors, we understand that our work impacts the lives of thousands of students. Each of our 23 directors joined this board because we recognize the pivotal role the College plays within our community. Whether we are serving students who will pursue a bachelor’s degree, or we are helping a student seek job training in order to immediately secure a job right here in Montgomery County, each of us is fully aware of the educational, economic, and societal impact of the foundation’s mission.

We also understand that it is only with the greater community’s support that we can help the College fulfill its mission. I want to thank each and every donor who has supported the Foundation—especially those who donated on behalf of our emergency assistance program. You see an

individual’s or an organization’s true colors during challenging times. In the midst of incredible obstacles, this community inspired us with generosity and genuine concern for the well-being of our students. Because of you, the College was able to meet students where they are and help get them where they want to go.

Vice Chair Mary Pat Alcus and I look forward to working alongside our fellow directors to fulfill the Foundation’s mission. Most importantly, we look forward to positively impacting the lives of students who look to the College for educational opportunities. To these students, I want you to rest assured that you have the support of this board and this community.

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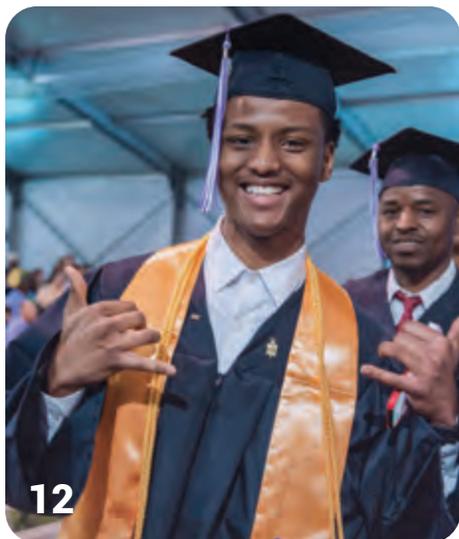
For gifts, contact Joyce Matthews, 240-567-7493

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Established in 1982, the Montgomery College Foundation is a 501(c)(3) institutionally related foundation and charitable organization governed by business, alumni, philanthropic, and community leaders. The Foundation’s mission is to provide critical financial and non-financial resources in advancing the Montgomery College mission to transform student lives and enrich the diverse communities it serves.

Cover design by Joe Weyman (featuring Kodjo Abalekpor '18, photo by Pete Vidal).

CONTENTS



- 2** From the Chair **4** News & Views
8 Executive Perspective **10** Business Corner
11 Alumni Who Give Back

12 PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Deliberate Action, Dismantled Barriers, Dreams Realized

- 17** A HEART FOR SCHOLARS
 Honoring the Organ Donor Who Saved My Life

- 18** CAMEROON CONNECTION
 Sisters Aid African Refugees, Honor Parents' Legacy

- 20** Community Partners **21** Planned Giving
22 Student Spotlight **23** MC Staff: Why I Give

MC MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FOUNDATION

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Changes in Leadership ... but the Mission Remains the Same



Ken Becker

KEN BECKER, longtime Montgomery College Foundation director and most recent board chair, moved into the role of immediate past chair on July 1. During his tenure, he oversaw production of the board's first Strategic Plan and establishment of the Board Challenge, which raised more than \$700,000 in gifts and pledges for scholarships at the annual Scholarship Recognition Luncheons, and the Foundation surpassed the \$30 million campaign goal.

Becker's steadfast commitment to serving students goes beyond serving on the board. He and his extended family represent three—going on four—generations of volunteer leadership and philanthropy. He and his wife, Arlene, will continue supporting the Arthur P. and Miriam G. Becker Scholarship, established by his parents in 1998. This fall, Becker serves on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee in addition to the Foundation's Executive and Real Estate Committees.

President **DERIONNE P. POLLARD** departed MC in July to become president of Nevada State College. Pollard led the College for 11 years; her presidency's motto was "radical inclusion," a term that pushed the College beyond its mission of access and opportunity to expanding wrap-around support services for nontraditional and underrepresented students. She established four scholarships: the Myles Julian Pollard-Jones ACES Endowed Scholarship, the P. Paul Pollard Generational ACES Scholarship, the Noble C. Jones Presidential Scholars Endowed Scholarship, and the Albert B. Pollard Presidential Scholars Endowed Scholarship, named for beloved family members.

CHARLENE MICKENS DUKES, Ed.D., stepped in as interim president of the College on August 7, 2021. Dukes brings 42 years of experience in administration, policy development, and national service to the College. She served as president of Prince George's Community College for 13 years; she retired in June 2020. "The presidential search, the ongoing pandemic, and the transitions around hybrid teaching, working, and learning should provide all of us with opportunities to practice agility."



Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

New Leadership

OFFICERS

Welcome to Montgomery College Foundation's newest officers: J. Stephen McAuliffe III, chair; Mary Pat Alcus, vice chair; and William C. Foote, treasurer. These leaders are committed to fulfilling the board's mission, ensuring all students have access to excellent higher education and job training opportunities. They will serve from 2021 through June 2023.



CHAIR J. Stephen McAuliffe III, Esq., principal, Miles & Stockbridge PC



VICE CHAIR Mary Pat Alcus
institutional investment consultant



DIRECTOR Jane C. Smith '76
independent consultant; past director, CompuSearch Software Systems; adjunct professor, business; Achieving the Promise Academy coach, Montgomery College



TREASURER William C. Foote CPA, treasurer; partner, Financial Advisory Services, Aronson LLC

DIRECTORS

Three new directors join the board: Jane C. Smith, Christopher Saca, and Jonathan Spires. Smith, an MC alumna, previously served as the MC Alumni Association's president (2018-2020), and as a board member for 11 years. Saca and Spires are student directors.

CHRISTOPHER SACA, a business major and Macklin Business Institute scholar, is a member of the Student Investment Club, peer mentoring programs, Student Business Association (vice president), Rockville Student Senate (treasurer), and the Strategic Planning Committee's Emergency Assistance Working Group and the Treasurer's Committee. He plans to transfer to a four-year institution to double major in finance and economics, and to continue investing in the community's well-being.

JONATHAN SPIRES, a biotechnology major, hopes to impact the community by providing resources and opportunities for individuals to live healthy and productive lives free from chronic illness and inequality. He also hopes to become a research physician practicing in the field of anesthesiology. He currently works as a clinical technician in the Emergency Department at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda. Spires has served as a senator at-large on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, as president of the Montgomery College Premedical Society, as editor in chief of *MC Excalibur*, the College's online newspaper, and as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee's Presidential Scholars Working Group and the Development and Impact Committee.

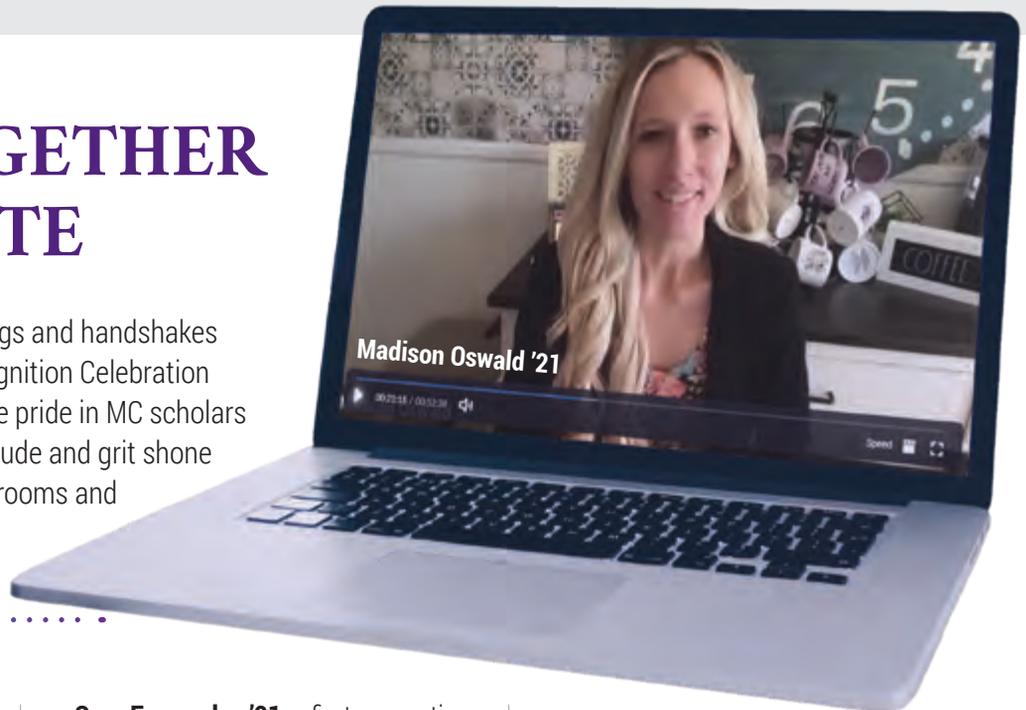


Christopher Saca and Jonathan Spires, MC students

To learn more, visit montgomerycollege.edu/alumni-friends-donors/who-we-are

COMING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE

Normally an in-person event, where hugs and handshakes are exchanged, this year's Donor Recognition Celebration took place online but sparked the same pride in MC scholars that it does every year. Students' gratitude and grit shone through as they broadcast from living rooms and kitchens—even from inside the car.



Madison Oswald '21, first in her family to graduate high school—and now MC, described financial difficulties brought on by a stepfather's drug addiction. When he died, he left her family \$200,000 in debt. "We lost pretty much everything.... I enrolled at MC, and it was kind of a guessing game. We didn't know how we were going to pay tuition."

In just nine months, Oswald graduated MC with an A.A. in general studies and transferred to the University of Pittsburgh. Currently, she is pursuing a double major in government and international politics. She hopes to go on to law school, become a human rights attorney, and ultimately run for U.S. Senate.

Sara Fernandez '21, a first-generation college student, made it through high school despite what she calls "big mistakes" and "family health scares." She spoke of the anxiety caused by not knowing whether she would be able to pay for college, and she called the scholarship money she received "truly overwhelming." Today, she is working as an R.N. at Holy Cross Hospital.

Another student, **Ludwin Huezo**, an immigrant from El Salvador, enrolled at MC after his wife became pregnant then lost the baby. Though painful, the experience led him to reassess his life and set new goals. "I didn't think I'd ever attend college," he says. "I never thought I'd get help.... You have no idea how meaningful it is to have support."

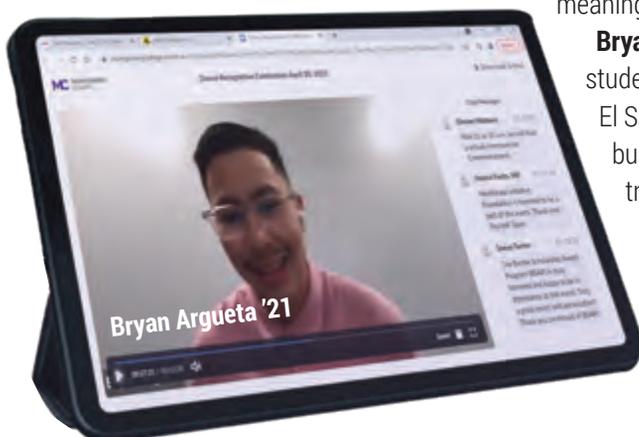
Bryan Argueta '21, an ACES** student and immigrant from El Salvador, pursued a degree in business administration and transferred to the University of Maryland this fall. His goal is to open an HVAC company with his dad, who graduated from MC

in 2012 and became a master technician. "Choosing MC came down to money. My family was not prepared to send me to a four-year institution."

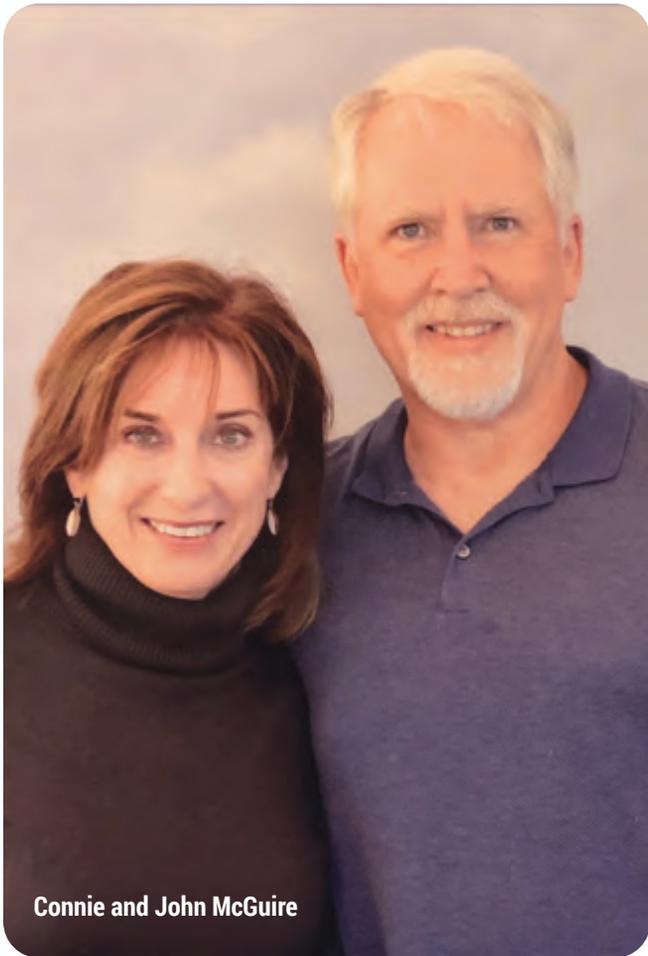
Each scholar at the event represented hundreds more who struggle to pay for classes in academic and workforce programs across the College every semester. In 2020 and 2021, the pandemic resulted in increased requests for support. According to a Hope Center for College, Community and Justice* survey: 47% of MC students reported food insecurity; 40% of working students lost their jobs; and 33% lost wages.

"I never thought I'd get help... You have no idea how meaningful it is to have support."

—Sara Fernandez '21



*#RealCollege During the Pandemic Survey Results, July 2020, Hope Center for College, Community and Justice at Temple University. **Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success.



Connie and John McGuire

“All it takes is to hear the back stories of these students to want to help each and every one of them.”

–Connie McGuire



Retired Professor Tackles Student Hunger

“When I first started teaching, I would bring in a basket of candy on test days,” says Connie McGuire, who retired from teaching at the College in 2018 after 20 years in the Business and Economics Department on the Rockville Campus (1998-2018). “I quickly realized students were hungry. So, I started bringing granola bars and nuts every day. A few students would stay late to take the leftover food home. They weren’t being greedy. They were hungry.”

McGuire and her husband, John, recently established an academic scholarship that follows an MC student through completion of a four-year degree at a Maryland institution, but their prior—and enduring—financial support focuses primarily on MC students experiencing food insecurity. During the pandemic, the McGuires contributed to the MC Foundation and requested the funds help supply the campus food pantry, ACES food programs, and food gift cards for student life.

“All it takes is to hear the back stories of these students to want to help each and every one of them,” says McGuire. Their support, combined with outpouring from the community, helped the Foundation reach a distribution milestone: \$3 million to more than 2,300 students in FY 2021.

“Connie and John McGuire do so much to ensure our students are supported,” says Joyce Matthews, executive director of the Montgomery College Foundation. “Whether it is their generosity on behalf of our food security programs or their most recent gift supporting a student through the completion of his or her bachelor’s degree, we simply couldn’t be more grateful.”



Joyce Matthews

*“What I thought
in the past
to be impossible
now became
possible.”*

–Gerardo,
scholarship recipient



Reading student thank-you notes is one of the most rewarding parts of my job. I am often struck by the vulnerabilities our students willingly share when writing to someone they have never met. It speaks to a shared bond and the connection students feel with the person or organization who has invested so meaningfully in their future. I also see their resilience in the face of setbacks and job losses.

GERARDO, a student with a learning disability, writes:

“Your scholarship is helping that inner kid who struggled most of his life. You’re helping break a cycle my family hasn’t been able to break out of. This pandemic has pushed me to get back in and achieve my family’s dreams, my own, and the dreams of everyone like me.

With hard work and determination, I am currently getting an A in every class. I want you to know who this scholarship is going to. I’m going to be the first person to graduate high school on both sides of my family. Not my uncles, aunties, grandparents, cousin, brothers, or sisters achieved this until I did. I am the first to attend college and be on track to be the first to graduate and have a degree from a college and do it with all those struggles—and then some.”

ROSE, a scholarship recipient, shares that since she made the bold decision to return to the classroom, her *daughter’s* grades have improved:

“My daughter looks on watching me dance at my laptop after successfully

depositing my homework in Blackboard. She cheers on my growth with such admiration. I understand how hard it is to redefine yourself. I am defining myself currently. Your scholarship grants me the ability to purchase ink, paper, and other supplies the Independence Card does not cover. I greatly appreciate being selected to receive such a generous gift. This generosity renews and inspires me to keep moving forward.”

This past year, the Montgomery College Foundation awarded a record-breaking **\$3,023,858** in scholarship support to students like Gerardo and Rose. And, despite the inability for us to meet face-to-face with donors, **47 new scholarships** were established during the lockdown—reflecting this community’s unwavering commitment to the well-being of your neighbors.

We sincerely hope to provide opportunities for students and scholarship donors to meet in person in the near future. In the meantime, we need look no further than these letters to be reminded of our students’ enduring appreciation.

FY21—A Record Year

Many things draw people to Montgomery County. High on the list of appealing reasons to live and work here is access to an incredible educational system, which often begins in the public schools and, for many, leads to Montgomery College and beyond. From here, the sky is the limit.

The Foundation is proud to have awarded a record amount of scholarship support to our students during fiscal year 2021. In addition to scholarship assistance, the Foundation provided emergency assistance in the form of gift cards, allowing students to purchase groceries. It also ensured that students had laptops so they could remain engaged and on track with their courses.

At a time when many in our community were struggling, donors stepped up—including almost 500 new donors. It's no wonder that Montgomery County is considered by many a wonderful place to live and work.

47 scholarships established

\$3+ million distributed in scholarships

\$1,200 average scholarship

427 new
individual
donors

69 new
organization
donors

Business Investments in MC Students Benefit the Local Economy



More than 70% of all MC graduates will stay in Montgomery County to work. Montgomery College is fueling the growth of the local economy.

Working in conjunction with area businesses, Montgomery College responds to the needs of today's—and tomorrow's—employers. In collaboration with area businesses, the College helps provide economic opportunity for our students, county residents, and the many businesses who hire MC students and alumni.

MC prepares the homegrown talent who energize our economy as they innovate, lead, and work in enterprises in the county and across the region. Each new hire—each new skill added—is a success story because every wage earner contributes to the greater local economy. Thousands of MC alumni choose to apply their education and job training right here in Montgomery County, contributing over \$1 billion annually to the county's economy.

Montgomery College is fortunate to have meaningful corporate partners.

These partners recognize the business value and corporate responsibility of investing in the education, training, and overall well-being of MC students. **Westat, Pepco, Johnson Controls, and Lockheed Martin** are among the area employers who have made grants to support scholarships, student emergency assistance, educational and mentoring supports, and career pathways for our students.

Other area businesses work alongside the College in programs such as the Cooperative Education and Internship

Program. In this program, eligible students are placed in full- or part-time positions directly related to their major. This allows the students to test their career objectives, while also providing area employers with access to potential future employees. MC students who participate in this program have worked at the **National Institutes of Health, Marriott, Voice of America, IBM, Euro Motorcars, NIST, Suburban Hospital, and Celera Genomics**, as well as many other organizations.

If you work for a company that would benefit from partnering with the College, please contact Craig Eozzo at craig.eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu or 240-479-1300.

Art for Everyone

Alumna's Gift Encourages Diversity | *By Diane Bosser*

Dawn Burns Potosky '80 discovered photography as a student at Rockville High School after finding an old camera. "The 1960 Edixa Reflex camera came to me fortuitously via the lost-and-found box at my uncle's business," she says. "I was lucky that Rockville High School had a wonderful team of talented artists/teachers when I was there, and I learned a great deal shooting for the yearbook and the newspaper."



“Being able to work with professionals in the VCT Department who were dedicated to instruction was immensely valuable to me.”

—Dawn Burns Potosky '80

.....

At Montgomery College, she worked with faculty who were accomplished media and photography professionals. "MC was a place where I could learn a craft," she says.

"Being able to work with professionals in the VCT Department [visual communications technologies] who were dedicated to instruction was immensely valuable to me."

"Professor Bruce Warren introduced me to Ansel Adams' Zone System and how to control tonal levels to achieve excellent black and white images ... and Woody Price taught me the commercial-photography side, including magazine photography. They brought an amazing array of skills that I would later apply to my work. MC truly set me up for my profession."

Potosky completed an associate's degree in visual communications, then earned a B.F.A. from Ohio University and pursued a career in photography/videography. Now, she is helping others explore art through the Burns Potosky Family Endowed Scholarship. The Potoskys envision the scholarship working for any MC student with an interest in art—from the committed to the curious.

"Arnie and I want to support students with financial need, including those who just want to take an art elective, because art is a key part of the visual communication all around us. I'm not necessarily talking about an expensive piece of art you hang on your wall—but about the art that is working in our lives daily via advertising, packaging, instructions, and online. Its practical applications are for everybody."

Dawn Burns Potosky and Arnold Potosky, Ph.D., have been married for 35 years. They are proud parents of three children and have two grandchildren. Arnie is currently a professor at The Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University. Dawn worked at George Washington University in biomedical communications, did commercial photography, and ran her own photography business. They enjoy hiking, biking, and travel. Their son, Samuel, received an A.A. in general studies from MC in 2012.

New Presidential Scholars Program

*DELIBERATE ACTION, DISMANTLED BARRIERS,
DREAMS REALIZED*

By Joan Woods



Every educator remembers the face and the name of a student who gave it all they had but still didn't finish college.

Teachers, professors, and academic coaches often think about what more they could have done. What they could have done better to personalize, customize, or tailor the experience that might have helped that student reach his or her full potential. Sometimes the questions and the answers are more complex than one educator's ability to create opportunity. Sometimes bigger issues are at play that must be addressed at the institutional level. And sometimes, the best way to help one student is to help many at the same time.



Far too many students who struggle to finish college are African American male students. The statistics bear this out.

.....

For Dr. Monica Brown, senior vice president for student affairs, and leaders at Montgomery College, it is clear that they have to do more than remember the faces. They have to face the numbers. Far too many students who struggle to finish college are African American male students. The statistics bear this out.

Montgomery College's data shows that more than half of African American male students will struggle to complete courses at a level needed to transfer to four-year institutions or to graduate MC with an associate's degree. On average, their graduation rates, grade point averages, and time to completion of a degree are significantly below those of the College's overall student body.

Montgomery County data also reflects challenging statistics on degree attainment for African Americans. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, and a 2021 Aspen Institute report, 72% of white and Asian residents of Montgomery County have an associate's degree or higher, compared to 50% of African American county residents. This means there are significant differences in income, with whites earning an average of \$135,635 per year and African Americans earning an average income of \$72,617. The report also reflects lower retention rates (return to college after first year) and degree completion rates for African American students in the county compared to their peers.

Montgomery College is positioned to offer a strategic response to this complex issue. The Presidential Scholars Program will help students succeed academically, complete their degree, and enter careers in industries, such as STEM fields and nursing, which have more positions than workers to fill them and offer life-sustaining wages. This investment in the students who face the most barriers to degree completion with evidence-based and equity-focused strategies means these talented, yet underachieving, students can reach their full academic and life potential.

Part of the motivation to strengthen support for African American male students and engage the broader community is the sense of urgency at all levels. The United States is experiencing a unique moment of attention and concern for African Americans and the African American experience, including increased recognition of inequities. After having witnessed protests in all 50 states and around the world, many more hearts and minds are focused right now on

investing in equitable solutions and understanding and tackling race-based problems. For Montgomery College, that means providing new solutions to increasing degree completion for African American male students facing the most difficult barriers to their college success.

Brown, whose division will oversee the Presidential Scholars Program, says this: “We are responsible for what we know now and what we do now. We need to be willing to address the issue head on. It fits into the College mission: We are accountable for our results.”

How Will the Presidential Scholars Program Change Lives?

The Presidential Scholars Program is open to students of all backgrounds who are committed to increasing the representation of men of color in high-wage/high-demand careers. Students in the program will receive individualized financial aid support, academic support, student support services, and connections to a network of internal and external mentors.



The institutional strategy to accelerate achievement for African American male students has four intended outcomes:

1. Increase completion of degrees and professional certifications.
2. Increase representation of African American men in careers in industries with life-sustaining salaries and more jobs than workers to fill them.
3. Connect students with employers and mentors from industries with the best opportunities for high salaries and excellent prospects.
4. Demonstrate (clearly) the intention and solutions for addressing systemic racism and other barriers to success.

Westat Steps Up

“Westat believes that investing in education strengthens our workforce, and the Presidential Scholars Program will expand access and opportunity for young people. Our company is proud to support this groundbreaking program that will make education an accessible dream for all citizens. I am encouraged

that more talented students will be empowered to achieve, and that education equity goals that are so greatly needed will be met. I know that Montgomery College will experience radical success in the years to come in strengthening our communities.”

—Scott Royal, Ph.D., president and CEO, Westat

Westat, the Rockville-based professional services corporation, has made a 10-year commitment to the Montgomery College Foundation in support of the Presidential Scholars Program.

Through the support of visionary and generous donors, the Montgomery College Foundation has secured \$1 million of the \$10 million needed over the next three to five

years. In that timeframe, the program will support 300 or more student participants in ways that yield the intended, measurable results. The first group of 30 students will begin in spring 2022.

“Each of the program’s strategies address recognized challenges for African American male students, including the cost of higher education, systemic and institutional racism, detachment from campus life, and higher education settings that do not always feel welcome or supportive of their goals,” says Brown.

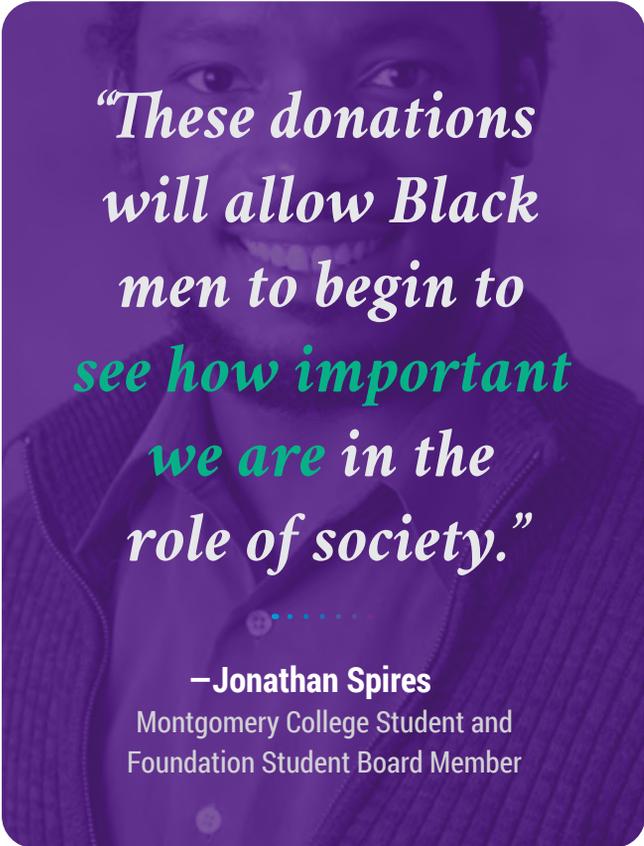
Students in the program will be those who can most benefit from a structured approach to financial, academic, student, and mentoring support to spur completion of a college degree or certification.

Specifically, program leaders will build unity and camaraderie among these students, use mentoring as a strategy for supporting students on their academic and

professional journeys, and provide living examples of African American male achievement, including many who can share their own college and professional experiences. At the same time, leaders will be focused on supporting students in their own career interests, exposing them to the jobs in high demand in our county and region.

Jonathan Spires, an African American student at Montgomery College and student representative on the Montgomery College Foundation Board of Directors, says this to those considering donating to this important program: “Your donation

is a long-term investment. Those who will benefit from it don’t know about it yet, they don’t know the amount of investment that’s being poured in their life yet.



“These donations will allow Black men to begin to see how important we are in the role of society.”

—Jonathan Spires
Montgomery College Student and
Foundation Student Board Member



“The support that was wrapped around him gave him the confidence to be successful.”

—Dr. Monica Brown



They don't know how important their opinion is. These donations will allow Black men to begin to see how important we are in the role of society.”

Brown, who has three sons of her own, has high hopes for the program and what it means for African American male students. Thinking about the program makes her reflect on one African American male student and what it took to get him to a degree. The student had been homeschooled and was significantly behind academically when he came to Montgomery College. He was struggling with social interaction and feeling connected while

in college. With the support of faculty and staff, he persisted in his studies and got very involved in the student senate. Brown says, “The support that was wrapped around him gave him the confidence to be successful. He transferred to Georgetown University. He graduated and got his law degree. He's just one of the students who come to mind. That's a success story.”

To learn more about the Presidential Scholars Program, contact Joyce Matthews, 240-567-7493 or joyce.matthews@montgomerycollege.edu ■

Increasing Representation in MC Classrooms

“We are on the front line witnessing the struggle of Black men and their absence in our college classrooms. Some have already benefited from coaching. Others miss out because the College was unable to reach them and convince them of the value of a college degree. James and I have

three sons, so this is near and dear to our hearts. Without this program, there may not be an opportunity for a young Black man to have the college experience, to get that degree, and have some semblance of opportunity.”

—Jane Smith, MC alumna, faculty member, MC Foundation board member

Donors Jane C. Smith '76 and James Washington, both active in coaching MC students, support the Presidential Scholars Program with their recent gift.



Dusty and Vicki Rhoades

A Heart *for* Scholars

Honoring the Organ Donor Who Saved My Life

By Vicki Rhoades

In April 1994, I was 47 years old and dying of a heart disease called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. I was very sick and could not leave the hospital. I would either receive a heart transplant or die at Fairfax Inova Hospital waiting for one, and I would be the organ donor. Because Leslie Rickerson Kotsalas '80 made the decision to donate her organs upon her death, and then her family honored her wishes on the most tragic day of their lives, I am alive today. I received Leslie's heart.

I went from dying to renewed hope and renewed life because of Leslie's decision. As a result, I had an overwhelming need to know about the wonderful person who chose to make another person's life possible, even as she was dying. Eventually, through anonymous letters via the Washington Regional Transplant Consortium, I was able to connect with Leslie's husband and then her mother. After a time, we exchanged names and then phone numbers.

My husband, Dusty, and I learned from Leslie's mother, Caroline, that the family had established the Leslie Rickerson Kotsalas Endowed Scholarship at Montgomery College. Leslie's experience at Montgomery College was special to her, so Leslie's family honored her by helping others pursue their educational goals at the College. Dusty first started making donations to the scholarship fund on

my birthday in December, but for the last few years, he has made the donation in April, the month that Leslie gave me a second chance at life.

Contributing to the scholarship in Leslie's name has been a way for us to continue to honor Leslie's generous and selfless act of becoming an organ and tissue donor. The scholarship helps others to fulfill their dreams and live more fully, which is a wonderful tribute to Leslie.

I have tried to live a meaningful life to honor Leslie's gift. Living well with purpose and intention is my personal tribute to her. Any good that I do in my life, she is also doing. Leslie's gift has reinforced my belief that we are all connected in ways we can never truly understand, and that love and goodness are timeless. Her beautiful spirit lives on. ■

The Leslie Rickerson Kotsalas Memorial Scholarship was established on March 16, 1999. To date, 27 students have benefitted from receiving Leslie's scholarship, which is designated for students with financial need, students with a handicap or disability, or students who are single parents. Dusty and Vicki Rhoades have been supporting the scholarship since 2003. To support the Leslie Rickerson Kotsalas Scholarship, visit montgomerycollege.edu/give, click on the scholarship drop-down menu, and type Kotsalas under "Other."



Cameroon Connection

Sisters Aid African Refugees, Honor Parents' Legacy By Diane Bosser

Gathered with Cameroonian friends for dinner in 2019, Irene Eckstrand and Betty Guthrie listened to accounts of incredible hardship and loss. Each one of their guests had fled Cameroon's civil war, bearing few personal items and the scars of injustice inflicted by French-Cameroonian government-led forces.

Their friend, Samuel Tumaban, for example, fled the country after being imprisoned and tortured. "I can't go back home," he said. "Armed groups—military government troops and separatists—are both dangerous. There are land mines everywhere. People are dying every day When I was released from prison, I was followed. A friend tells me they are still looking for me—my picture is still up in the police station five years later." Before the evening was over, Betty and Irene asked their guests

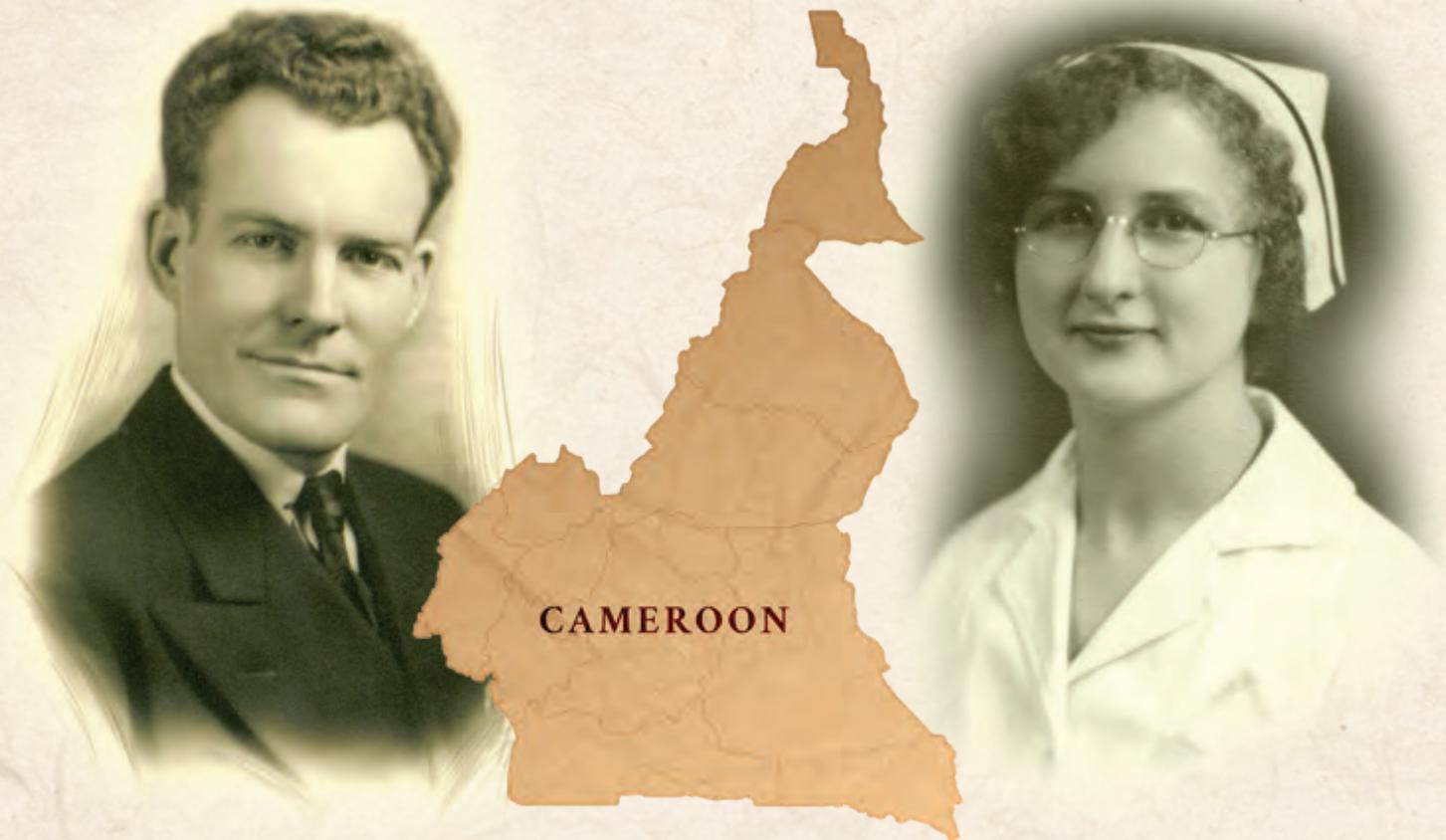
what they could do to help. "They all said, 'we want an education and we want to give back,'" recalls Irene. Betty adds, "I am endlessly humbled and inspired by their resilience and courage, and their determination to make the most of their new lives

here." Betty and Irene's connection to Cameroon stems from their childhood in Africa. When they were girls, Betty Guthrie and Irene Eckstrand lived at a mission station in Cameroon. For six years, they called Bafia, a town in the country's

"I am endlessly humbled and inspired by their resilience and courage, and their determination to make the most of their new lives here." –Betty Guthrie



Top: Rare photo of the bicoastal sisters together. Betty (left), Irene (right). (Courtesy of Betty Guthrie) Above: Gathering at Irene's: Betty (center, seated) and Irene (standing, fourth from right) surrounded by Cameroonian friends: (front row) Celestine, Mireille, Clinton, Laurel (Irene's daughter) (back row, from left) Blaise, Erasmus, Hadrain, Gilbert, Nobel, Armstrong, Joseph, Samuel, (unknown), Steve (Irene's husband). The Cameroonian garb was a gift from their friend Samuel Tumaban. (Photo courtesy Guthrie family)



Above, left and right: Bill Guthrie, M.D., and Eula Guthrie, R.N., worked in Cameroon as Presbyterian missionaries. (Photos courtesy Guthrie family)

western French-speaking region, home. Bill and Eula Guthrie, their parents, were medical professionals and Presbyterian missionaries. During two separate assignments, Bill, a doctor, and Eula, a nurse, treated patients at a hospital there in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Irene, born in Africa, was six when the family moved back to the U.S. in 1955. Betty was 13. More than 60 years later, the Guthrie sisters are following in their parents' footsteps by helping Cameroonians in need here in the United States. Betty, a professor emeritus at the University of California-Irvine and living on the West Coast, serves as a court advocate for Cameroonians seeking asylum. Irene, in Maryland, has coordinated with her sister on behalf

of Cameroonians in Montgomery County who need immigration advice. In 2010, the sisters combined

“The war in Cameroon continues to be horrible, but we can step up to do something here.”

–Irene Guthrie

forces to establish the Bill and Eula Guthrie Endowed Scholarship to support Cameroonian students at MC. “After the dinner event, we

realized starting a scholarship was a great idea,” says Irene. “The war in Cameroon continues to be horrible,” she says, “but we can step up to do something here. For them, even the minimal tuition at MC is too much.... This way, they have a chance of making their lives here way better.”

Betty and Irene’s initial gift of \$50,000 grew to \$85,000 within months as family members and friends from coast to coast contributed. Irene’s Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville and Betty’s Quaker community in California also raised money and contributed. This fall, the first students begin receiving support from the Bill and Eula Guthrie Endowed Scholarship. ■

Building Cultural Competency in Health Care

Grant Focuses on First-Generation Students, Immigrants with Language and Cultural Knowledge | *By Diane Bosser*

For medical professionals in Montgomery County, treating patients from around the globe is routine. The large and diverse foreign-born population, which now comprises more than half the county, is driving demand for skilled workers with multicultural knowledge and foreign language skills.

Through a renewed partnership with the Healthcare Initiative Foundation (HIF) and The Universities at Shady Grove (USG), Montgomery College is opening doors to more nursing, public health, and behavioral health/social work students with existing multicultural skills.

In spring 2021, HIF awarded a five-year grant totaling \$1 million (shared between the Montgomery College Foundation and USG) to provide scholarships, life assistance awards, and wraparound educational and career supports to student awardees.

“The scholarship emphasizes the importance of workers having cultural competency in a very diverse county,” says Crystal Carr Townsend, HIF president and CEO. “First-generation students, with their cultural knowledge and foreign language abilities, are a valuable asset to the community—especially in health care settings.”

Pascaline Koumegui '19, a Montgomery College nursing alumna, came to the United States from Cameroon at age 33. Her native language is French. As an HIF scholarship recipient, she completed an associate's and a bachelor's degree in nursing in four years—while also raising two young sons with her husband, an auto-detailing technician. Financial support from the scholarship allowed her to complete the rigorous nursing degree/certifications,



Pascaline Koumegui



Ijeoma Aham

and ultimately, to enhance her career as a medical-surgical shift nurse in a local hospital.

“One of the benefits of the HIF program,” says Koumegui, “is the bilingual staff training. I earned certification in English-French medical translation, which allows me to serve as a medical interpreter. That skill is

outstanding on my resume—and I feel so happy to be able to make a difference in somebody's life.”

Another HIF scholarship recipient and Montgomery College nursing graduate, **Ijeoma Aham '21**, took specialized training in cultural competency. Aham came to the U.S. from Nigeria, where English is the official language. She currently works in home health care in Silver Spring.

“The cultural competency training taught me how to approach patients from different countries with an additional awareness of their cultural practices,” says Aham. “It helps me serve them better as a nurse.”

Since 2016, the HIF Scholarship has benefitted 207 students overall, including 73 Montgomery College graduates (46 nursing, 14 public health, and 13 mental health). The new grant (2021-2026) will support 28 HIF students at MC and 28 at USG each semester.

According to Townsend, HIF expanded the new grant to include a career readiness coordinator who will help the HIF students hone their professional readiness. “The Career Experience Opportunities (CEO) program will benefit students by providing career competency workshops, career coaching, an annual industry-specific event, and a mentor match in their chosen field of study.”

For more information about supporting future health care professionals, contact Stuart Tart, corporate and foundation relations director, 240-567-7494 or stuart.tart@montgomerycollege.edu.

She Served MC for Four Decades— and Leaves a Lasting Legacy for Students

Donna Schena '80, and Husband, Richard, Provide a Legacy Gift for Workforce Development and Continuing Education Students | *By Jill Fitzgerald*

"I was happiest when I got a job I didn't know how to do because I'd learn it—I'd figure it out," said recently retired Montgomery College administrator Donna Schena. Her illustrious—and eclectic—43-year career included a brief stint in teaching as well as roles in three of the four major divisions of the College. In 2019, Dr. Pollard tapped her to become senior vice president for administrative and fiscal services.



The Schenas started their careers as skilled workers: Donna trained as a dental assistant, and Richard was a volunteer firefighter and a police cadet before he trained to be an airline pilot. "Our fathers were skilled blue-collar workers—and we both think they did an amazing job of providing for their families."

"I never had a career plan in my head," said Schena, who took on positions often at the urging of senior leadership. "I didn't just consider what a job should be, I would look at a job and think, 'what *could* this be?'"

Her work ethic and tireless positivity earned the adulation of students, faculty, staff, and College administrators alike. Former Montgomery College President DeRionne Pollard said, "Donna was one of the most people-centered employees I've had the pleasure of working with. Her dedication to our students and their experience is profoundly influenced by her own unique journey at Montgomery College."

"I always believed the College brings out the student in every one of us," said Schena. "That's what prompted Richard and I to endow a scholarship affording opportunities to students who want to enter into a trade to become a skilled and credentialed worker."

Longtime donors to the Montgomery College Foundation, the Schenas have made more than 30 transformational gifts to MC, recently establishing the Schena Family Endowed Scholarship with a \$10,000 gift. At her retirement celebration in June, the couple announced a \$75,000 legacy gift from their estate to students in College's Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WDCE) division.

George Payne, vice president and provost of WDCE, said, "Our noncredit programs do not have federal financial aid, which makes the value of scholarships that much more meaningful. Whether it's a returning adult, someone who's recareering, or a young person preparing for entry into the workforce, a credential can be a passport to many, many possibilities. There's a ripple effect to their gifts that goes beyond tuition. There are benefits to the families of our students, our community, and our economy."

Schena plans to continue working—albeit on a volunteer basis. She started volunteering for the Parkinson Foundation of the National Capital Area (PFNCA) when Richard was diagnosed with the disease in 2009. Over the years she served as liaison to the board of the national Parkinson's Foundation, was a panel member at the Michael J. Fox Conference in Washington, D.C., and was board chair for seven years. She stepped away from PFNCA's board when she accepted the senior vice president position at the College—and she is eager to renew her commitment.

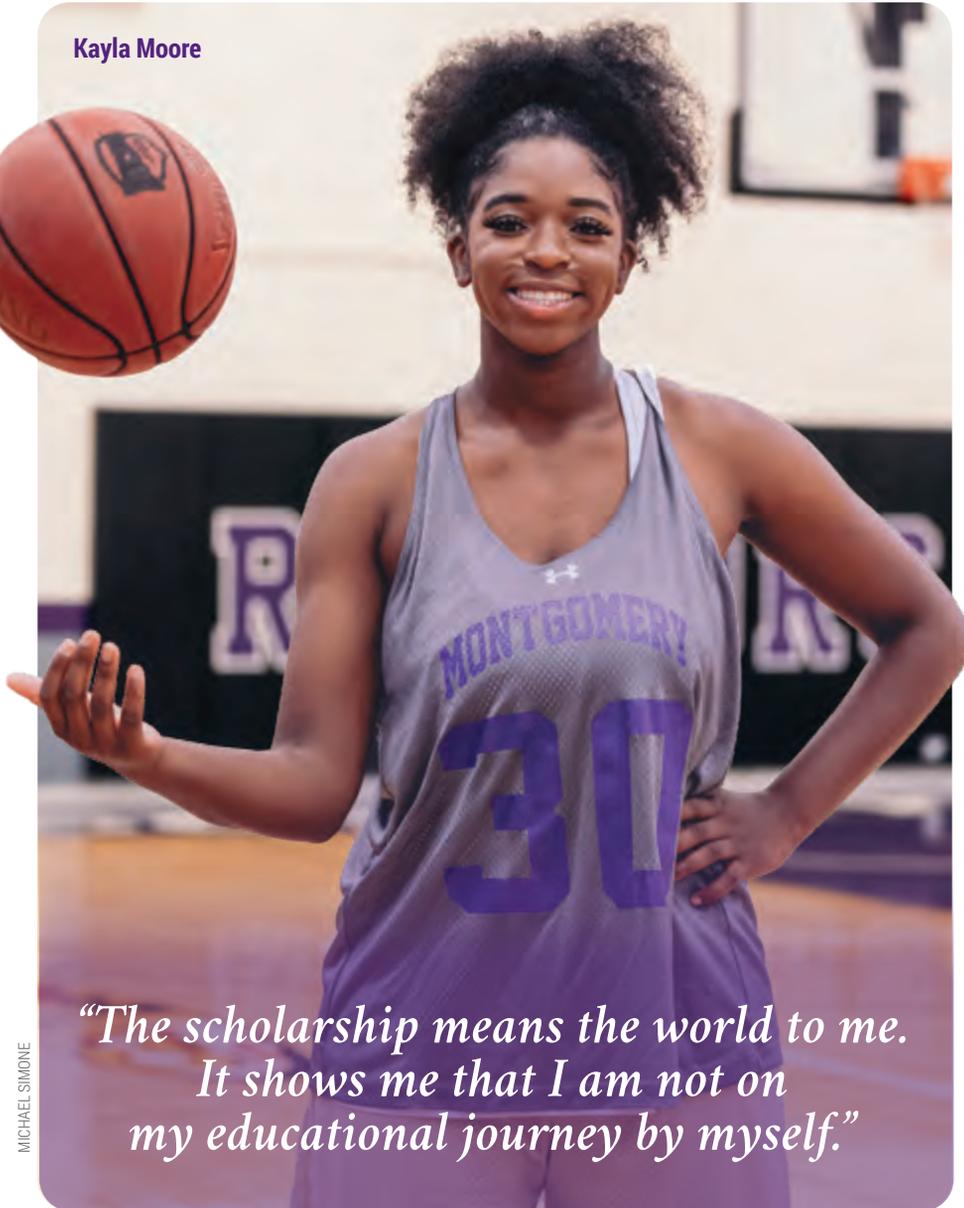
"I want to wake up every day and say, 'How can I make a difference for someone?'" she said.

To include MC and its students in your own estate plans, please contact Craig Eozzo at 240-479-1300 or craig.eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu

Student Athlete's Balancing Act

Scholarship Helps Student Focus on Teamwork and Academics | *By Katie Kumkumian*

Kayla Moore



"The scholarship means the world to me. It shows me that I am not on my educational journey by myself."

MICHAEL SIMONE

It's not easy to be a college athlete—juggling the intellectual and physical demands required of both roles. For Kayla Moore, the 6-foot forward for the Raptors women's basketball team, her weekly schedule includes participating in two-hour basketball practices four days a week, conditioning and strength training on the fifth day, as well as mandatory study halls. Moore also designates additional time for studying in order to maintain her impressive GPA. In addition to all this, Moore also manages to find the time—and the energy—to work not one, but two jobs.

During the week, the alarm goes off early at Kayla Moore's home, ensuring she is ready to lead JumpBunch classes and share her love of exercise with her young students. On the weekends, Moore can be found working at Tru2Form Hoops, running drills and imparting her love of basketball to program participants. With so much on her plate, she follows a strict schedule in order to get everything done.

Moore is incredibly grateful for the athletic scholarship she receives because it alleviates the stress of how to pay for classes and allows her to focus on her academic and athletic goals.

"The scholarship I have has given me the support system of educators, coaches, and counselors who are doing everything in their power to help me achieve my athletic and academic goals," says Moore. "This scholarship means the world to me. It shows me that I am not on my educational journey by myself."

After completing her degree at MC, where she is studying political science and criminal justice, Moore's plans include transferring to a four-year program to pursue a bachelor's degree. She will then apply to law school.

Utilizing the skills she has been honing for many years—teamwork, the ability to prioritize, communications, and self-discipline—she wants to "defend those who otherwise would be swept under the rug and help educate people negatively impacted by the criminal justice system."

The scholarship Moore receives, along with her work ethic and determination, allows her to give her all on in the court and in the classroom, and someday, the courtroom.

'My Mother Gave Back to Show Her Gratitude'

Karla Silvestre's Family Legacy | By Katie Kumkumian

Karla Silvestre is a busy woman. On any given day, she can be found balancing the demands of two professional roles that impact the lives of countless Montgomery County community members. As director of community engagement at Montgomery College, Silvestre oversees the College's efforts to reach underserved residents, increase engagement with community stakeholders, and manage community partnerships. As a Montgomery County at-large school board member and current vice president, she works to ensure that more than 160,000 public school students have access to the educational resources they seek in area schools.

Staying engaged and giving back to the community are family values for Silvestre, who credits her commitment to uplifting others to the life lessons instilled in her by both of her parents, Darkis and Antonio Silvestre. When the Silvestre family fled violence in Guatemala and moved to the United States, Silvestre was just 8 years old. Not speaking any English, her parents took whatever work they could find and enrolled their children in the local schools.

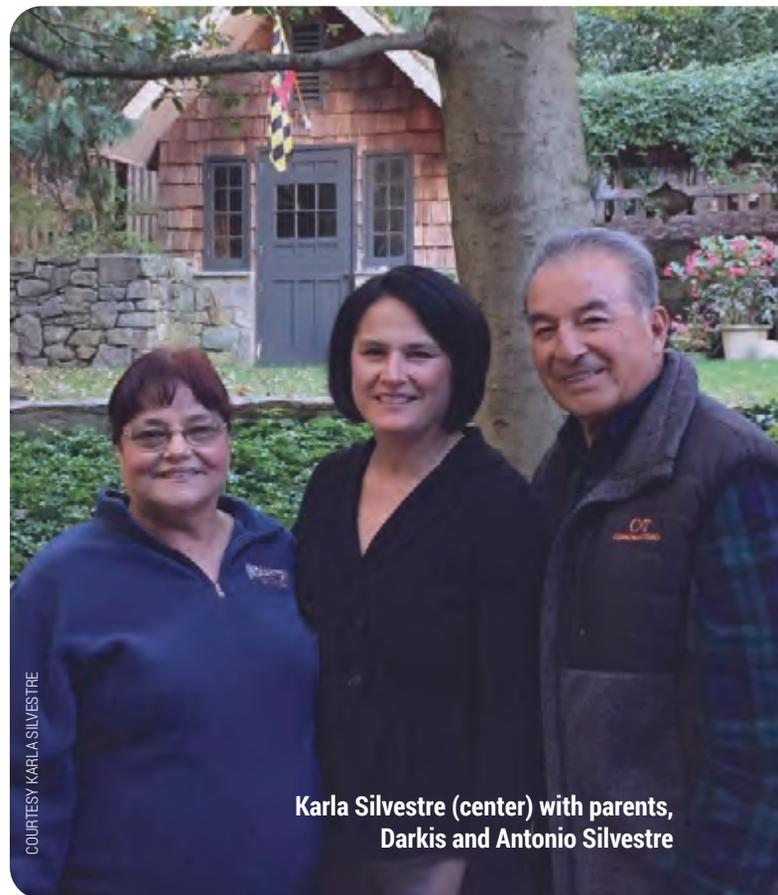
When asked about her experience as a new immigrant, Silvestre is quick to mention the help her family received from others—an acknowledgement that greatly influences all aspects of her life.

"Everyday people, from our priest to our teachers, went above and beyond to help my family and to support our education and sense of belonging," she says. "My mother then gave back for the rest of her life. I wanted to honor her legacy by continuing to give back by helping students better afford a college education through scholarships."

*"Everyday people,
from our priest to our
teachers, went above and
beyond to help my family ...
My mother then gave back
for the rest of her life."*

—Karla Silvestre

After her mother passed away, Silvestre established the Darkis Ester Silvestre Scholarship, a current-use scholarship for undocumented students. Like the students who receive her mother's scholarship, Silvestre was also undocumented after



Karla Silvestre (center) with parents,
Darkis and Antonio Silvestre

her family's travel visas expired. She knows firsthand the challenges students in this position face and is committed to helping others have opportunities to pursue an education and the opportunities it provides.

"My family won our political asylum case before I graduated high school, giving me legal status," says Silvestre. "I can't help but wonder what road my life would have taken if I continued to be undocumented and did not have access to financial aid. Would I have gone to college at all?"

Honor Someone This Holiday Season

The Presidential Scholars Program at Montgomery College is our direct response to the call for equity in education. The program is open to students of all backgrounds who share a commitment to increasing the representation of African American males in high-demand professions.

Presidential Scholars will receive wrap-around support in every aspect of the college experience:

- Financial aid assistance
- Academic support
- Student support services
- Mentoring

Honor someone who has inspired you or who has made the world—or your world—a better place by making a gift to the new Presidential Scholars Program in his or her name.

Establish a fully endowed scholarship named for someone you respect and admire. From now until June 30, 2022, this can be created for as low as \$166/month for five years or \$10,000 total.

To learn more, contact Joyce Matthews at joyce.matthews@montgomerycollege.edu.