

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN, COMMISSIONERS, FELLOW RESIDENTS...

GOOD MORNING!

IT'S ALWAYS MY PLEASURE TO TAKE THE TIME DURING OUR COMMISSION MEETINGS TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THESE FINE YOUNG PEOPLE TO OUR COMMUNITY BY HIGHLIGHTING THE MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS.

THESE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN DUE TO THEIR WORK THE AREAS OF SCHOLARSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND OVERALL EXCELLENCE.

THEY ALSO SHARE A PASSION FOR SERVICE TO OTHERS, AND THEIR EFFORTS ARE MAKING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.

AS WITH PAST WINNERS, THE FULL PROFILES OF EACH OF THIS MONTH'S SCHOLARS WILL BE FEATURED IN THE HALL OF STARS ON MY WEBSITE.

NOW, SINCE I WAS IN TALLAHASSEE DURING THE APRIL COMMISSION MEETING, WE ARE GOING TO ANNOUNCE THE MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS FOR APRIL.

SO HERE WE GO!

OUR UNSTOPPABLE SCHOLAR IS ANGELA PATRICIA ORTIZ, A JUNIOR AT THE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES HOMESTEAD CAMPUS, WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER DENNIS C. MOSS' DISTRICT.

ANGELA WAS DIAGNOSED WITH HODGKIN'S LYMPHOMA LAST YEAR, WITHIN A WEEK OF BEGINNING HER STUDIES AT SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES.

ALTHOUGH ANGELA WAS ADVISED TO WITHDRAW FROM SCHOOL, SHE REFUSED TO GIVE UP THE OPPORTUNITY THAT SHE HAD WORKED SO HARD FOR.

SHE HAS NOT ALLOWED HER ILLNESS TO PREVENT HER FROM ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND HAS, SO FAR, EARNED A 5.37 WEIGHTED GPA.

THANKFULLY, HER CANCER HAS NOW GONE INTO REMISSION.

ANGELA WAS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND IS A MEMBER OF KEY CLUB AND HAS BEEN NAMED TO THE PRINCIPAL'S HONOR ROLL.

LAST YEAR, SHE AND ONE OF HER CLASSMATES STARTED A RECYCLING PROGRAM THROUGH WHICH THEY LED A GROUP OF FIFTEEN STUDENTS TO RECYCLE PAPER AND PLASTIC PRODUCTS.

SHE HAS ALSO PARTICIPATED IN RELAY FOR LIFE, "THIS IS THE DOG" ANIMAL RESCUE EFFORTS, AND PENNIES FOR PATIENTS.

IN ADDITION, ANGELA IS A BLACK BELT IN KARATE AND AN AVID READER.

AS A RESULT OF HER ILLNESS, SHE IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING A PROJECT TO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND ACTIVITIES TO CANCER PATIENTS WHO ARE CONFINED AT BAPTIST HOSPITAL IN THE CHILDREN'S CANCER UNIT.

LET'S ALL GIVE ANGELA A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

OUR EMERGING LEADER IS CAROLINA DALIA GONZALEZ, A JUNIOR AT OUR LADY OF LOURDES ACADEMY, WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER XAVIER SUAREZ' DISTRICT.

CAROLINA CREATED DEFERRED ACTION FOR DREAMERS (D.A.D.) IN 2012, AN ORGANIZATION THAT ASSISTS UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS IN APPLYING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY'S DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS PROGRAM.

THE ORGANIZATION HOLDS INFORMATIONAL EVENTS AND CLINICS THAT BRING IN LAWYERS TO WORK WITH APPLICANTS.

SINCE THE START OF HER WORK, SHE HAS HELPED OVER 500 APPLICANTS.

HER ORGANIZATION HAS ALSO PARTNERED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO CREATE A MINI GRANT PROGRAM THAT WOULD PAY THE \$465 APPLICATION FEE FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT AFFORD IT DUE TO DISABILITIES OR FINANCIAL STRESS.

TO DATE, SHE HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY RAISED \$22,000 FOR THIS EFFORT.

CAROLINA SPENT 6 WEEKS IN WASHINGTON DC DURING THE SUMMER OF 2013 INTERNING FOR CONGRESSWOMAN ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN.

SHE WAS A FINALIST FOR THE PEACE FIRST PRIZE, A NATIONAL AWARD RECOGNIZING LEADING YOUTH PEACEMAKERS WHO ARE FOCUSED ON CREATING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES.

SHE HAS ALSO BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE IMMIGRATION COALITION AS AN "HONORARY DREAMER."

IN ADDITION, SHE IS PRESIDENT OF HER SCHOOL'S WRITING CLUB, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB, A MEMBER OF THE SWIM TEAM, AND A PAID FREELANCE WRITER FOR TEEN LINK AT THE SUN SENTINEL.

CAROLINA ASPIRES TO BECOME A WRITER / JOURNALIST AFTER SHE GRADUATES FROM COLLEGE.

LET'S ALL GIVE CAROLINA A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

AND, OUR PURSUER OF EXCELLENCE IS MEGAN CERCHIAI, A SENIOR AT CORAL REEF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER LYNDA BELL'S DISTRICT.

MEGAN IS A SENIOR PURSUING HER INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA AND SHE HAS A 5.3 GPA.

SHE PARTICIPATES IN THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY AND THE QUILL AND SCROLL HONOR SOCIETY.

THROUGH THE BEST BUDDIES PROGRAM, MEGAN HAS A BUDDY WHO SHE SPENDS TIME WITH WEEKLY.

SHE HAS PARTICIPATED IN ALL ASPECTS OF FOOD COLLECTION, PREPARATION, AND DISTRIBUTION THROUGH FOOD PANTRIES FOR SIX YEARS.

EACH THANKSGIVING, SHE HELPS PREPARE 7,300 DINNERS AND DELIVERS THEM TO THE HOMES OF THOSE WHO WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE A TRADITIONAL MEAL.

MEGAN TOOK PART IN A MISSION TRIP TO ALABAMA AFTER THE 2011 TORNADOS DEVASTATED THE AREA. SHE HELPED CLEAR DEBRIS, WORKED ON RE-BUILDING HOMES, AND ASSISTED RESIDENTS IN GETTING THE SUPPLIES THEY URGENTLY NEEDED.

MEGAN PARTICIPATES IN THE RAIDERS WRITE PROGRAM, THROUGH WHICH SHE TUTORS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO DEVELOP THEIR WRITING SKILLS.

SHE AND ONE OF HER FRIENDS ALSO HAVE A BLOG WHERE THEY CONNECT WITH OTHERS HER AGE AND SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP.

SHE HOPES TO DEVELOP HER WRITING SKILLS IN ORDER TO PURSUE A COMMUNICATIONS DEGREE IN COLLEGE.

LET'S GIVE MEGAN A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

MADAME CHAIR, PLEASE JOIN ME IN CONGRATULATING THESE SHINING EXAMPLES OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY'S BRIGHT FUTURE...

AND LET'S GIVE OUR MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS ONE LAST ROUND OF APPLAUSE!