

MADAM CHAIR, COMMISSIONERS, DEAR FRIENDS...

IT'S MY PLEASURE THIS MORNING TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR COMMUNITY FROM SOME FINE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN AS WE ANNOUNCE THE MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER.

THESE STUDENTS ARE BEING HONORED IN THE AREAS OF SCHOLARSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND OVERALL EXCELLENCE.

THEY ALSO SHARE A PASSION FOR SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY.

AS WITH PAST WINNERS, THEIR PROFILES ARE FEATURED IN OUR HALL OF STARS ON MY WEBSITE.

AND NOW, THIS MONTH'S MAYOR'S SHINING SCHOLARS.

OUR EMERGING LEADER IS LEILA ABDELRAHMAN, A SENIOR AT CORAL REEF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER MOSS' DISTRICT.

LEILA TAKES ONLINE AND DUEL ENROLLMENT COURSES TO SUPPLEMENT HER HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION.

SHE ALSO APPLIED FOR A RESEARCH INTERNSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI FOR MORE EXPERIENCE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

LEILA HELPED FOUND THE MUSLIM STUDENT UNION AT HER SCHOOL.

SHE WON THE PRINCETON PRIZE IN RACE RELATIONS, WHICH PROMOTES HARMONY, UNDERSTANDING, AND RESPECT AMONG PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES BY IDENTIFYING AND RECOGNIZING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHOSE EFFORTS HAVE HAD A SIGNIFICANT, POSITIVE EFFECT ON RACE RELATIONS IN THEIR SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITIES.

THROUGH THIS AWARD, SHE WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE HER STORY WITH OTHER STUDENTS AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY.

LEILA ALSO CO-FOUNDED "STEM-ULATED YOUTH" BECAUSE MANY OF THE YOUTH IN MIAMI CONTINUE TO SHY AWAY FROM A CAREER IN STEM DUE TO PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS OF HOW DIFFICULT IT COULD BE.

THE GROUP AIMS TO SHOW STUDENTS THAT SCIENCE AND MATH CAN INSTEAD BE FUN AND STIMULATING THROUGH INTERACTIVE SEMINARS.

LEILA HOPES TO BECOME AN ESTEEMED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHER AND, ONE DAY, WIN A NOBLE PEACE PRIZE FOR HER WORK WITH STEM-RELATED EDUCATION.

LET'S GIVE LEILA A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

OUR UNSTOPPABLE SCHOLAR IS CATERINA VILLAVICENCIO, A SOPHOMORE AT ST. BRENDAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER SOUTO'S DISTRICT.

CATERINA SETS GOALS FOR HERSELF AND STOPS AT NOTHING TO ACHIEVE THEM.

HER TEST-TAKING SKILLS WERE PREVIOUSLY AN OBSTACLE FOR HER, HOWEVER, SHE HAS WORKED HARD TO BUILD UP HER CONFIDENCE TO NOT LET HER NERVES GET IN HER WAY.

SHE HAS PROGRESSIVELY IMPROVED AT TEST-TAKING AND HAS HELPED OTHERS BY SHOWING THEM THAT THEY TOO CAN OVERCOME THE STRESS THEY FACE.

CATERINA FOUNDED A BOOK BAG DRIVE.

EVERY SUMMER SHE SEEKS HELP FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO PURCHASE SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.

LAST YEAR HER DONATION SURPASSED ONE HUNDRED BOOK BAGS FILLED WITH SUPPLIES.

SHE ALSO SPONSORED A TOY DRIVE IN HOMESTEAD AND COLLECTED 130 GIFTS TO DISTRIBUTE AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGH THE COMMUNITY.

CATERINA WAS RECENTLY ACCEPTED INTO THE LAW AND GLOBAL BUSINESS ACADEMY AT HER SCHOOL, WHICH REQUIRES A MINIMUM OF A 3.5 GPA AND CHARACTER REFERENCES FROM TEACHERS.

THE ACADEMY WILL OFFER HER THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND INTERN WITH ATTORNEYS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FIELD.

LET'S GIVE CATERINA A BIG HAND!

AND, OUR PURSUER OF EXCELLENCE IS NICHOLAS NAVA, A SENIOR AT THE SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES WHO LIVES IN COMMISSIONER SUAREZ' DISTRICT.

NICHOLAS HAS A 5.93 WEIGHTED GPA AND IS ENROLLED IN DUAL ENROLLMENT CLASSES AT MIAMI DADE COLLEGE.

HE HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN RECOGNIZED ON THE PRINCIPAL'S HONOR ROLL, IS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY AND MU ALPHA THETA MATH HONOR SOCIETY, AND WAS ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF HIS JUNIOR CLASS.

HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE BIBLE CLUB, MODEL U.N., THESPIAN CLUB, THE TRACK TEAM, AND PARTICIPATES IN VARIOUS MATH COMPETITIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

NICHOLAS IS TRULY COMMITTED TO SERVING OUR COMMUNITY.

HE IS APPROACHING 1200 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS AND WILL LIKELY EXCEED 2000 HOURS BY THE TIME HE GRADUATES FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

HE HAS ORGANIZED AND LED SEVERAL PROJECTS TO BENEFIT THE SICK AND ELDERLY.

HE ORGANIZED A GROUP CALLED "SAS CARES," WHICH VISITS THE PALACE NURSING HOME, WHERE THEY ENTERTAIN THE ELDERLY WITH THEIR MUSICAL SKILLS.

IN ADDITION, HE VOLUNTEERS AT BAPTIST HOSPITAL, PLAYING THE GUITAR AND SINGING TO PATIENTS IN THEIR ROOMS.

HE ALSO ENCOURAGES A GROUP OF HIS FRIENDS TO FREQUENTLY VISIT THE OVERTOWN YOUTH CENTER TO TUTOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON FCAT SKILLS.

NICHOLAS IS THE LEAD ATTORNEY ON THE SAS MOCK TRIAL TEAM.

HE ASPIRES TO ATTEND HARVARD AFTER HE GRADUATES AND VIEWS THE LAW AS A NOBLE PROFESSION THROUGH WHICH HE CAN CONTINUE TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

LET'S GIVE NICOLAS A ROUND OF APPLAUSE!

MADAM CHAIR, COMMISSIONERS, FRIENDS...

THESE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ARE A SHINING EXAMPLE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY'S BRIGHT FUTURE...

AND AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL!

PLEASE JOIN ME IN CONGRATULATING THEM FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS AND HARD WORK!

