



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Teen Triumphs: SCUSD Grads Have Amazing Stories

June 8, 2011 (Sacramento) – Beginning tomorrow (Thursday, June 9), thousands of Sacramento City Unified School District seniors will don caps and gowns for joyful – and sometimes tearful – graduation ceremonies.

Many of the young men and women who will be crossing stages throughout the city have heartwarming stories of struggle and triumph, as they fought such obstacles as poverty, loss of family members, peer pressure and language barriers to make it to their graduation day.

SCUSD is the 12th largest public school district in California and serves 47,000 students. Here are the stories of some graduating teens that have not only overcome their circumstances, but are moving on to some of the most prestigious colleges in America. **(Media outlets interested in interviewing any of these amazing students can contact the SCUSD Communications Office at 643-9042.)**

Deirdre Regina Holloway – John F. Kennedy High School

Deirdre Regina Holloway was born in Los Angeles in 1992, the youngest of three children and the child that always had a smile on her face.

When Deirdre was seven, she was taken away from her mother and placed in the foster care system. She and her sister lived in three foster homes until they were placed in the care of their mother's cousin.

During that time, Deirdre's mother passed away. Even though the death of her mother took a toll on her, she continued to be the girl with a smile on her face. As she grew older, Deirdre shined in school.

She earned straight A's in middle school and was valedictorian of her class at Los Angeles Academy Middle School in 2007. She continued her success into high school when she attended Thomas Jefferson High School. In the middle of her freshman year, Deirdre and her family moved to Sacramento and she started attending John F. Kennedy High School.

Adapting to the new surroundings was a challenge for her but she prevailed. Deirdre has maintained a 3.5 GPA or higher while participating in extracurricular activities such as the Black Student Union, National Art Honor Society, the Science Lab, Academy of Dreams, the Pawz Off Dance Team and community service activities with her church. She has received numerous awards and honors over the years for academics and leadership.

Deirdre is a graduating senior this year at Kennedy. This fall, she will be attending Mills College in Oakland on a \$16,000 scholarship. **She will be graduating with her class at 3 p.m. on Monday, June 13, at Memorial Auditorium.**

Jacqueline Maya-Silva – West Campus High School

West Campus High School senior Jacqueline Maya-Silva has overcome the pressures of extreme poverty to find success. Her mother is a single parent who has struggled to make ends meet for Jackie and her younger sister, who is disabled.

Despite these challenges, Jackie has been accepted to Stanford University and is also a Gates Millennium Scholar, which means tuition and other expenses for all four years will be fully paid by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. On top of that, she is one of only 25 students out of 1,500 applicants to win entry to Stanford's prestigious summer program for students pursuing medical careers. (She also won entry into Stanford's Medical Youth Science Summer Residential Program last year as one of 20 students from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley area). Jackie carries a **4.3 GPA**, her first language is Spanish and her goal is to attend Stanford and earn her medical degree to become a cardiologist. **She will be graduating with her class at 7 p.m. on Monday, June 13, at Memorial Auditorium.**

Kyle Rowland – C.K. McClatchy High School

With a stretch of the imagination, one could say that Kyle has been playing the harmonica since birth. When he was just a baby his father put a harmonica in his crib. For his first couple of years, Kyle used his harmonica as a pacifier/teething ring. Kyle's first memories of playing the harmonica are when he would sit alongside his father and listen to him play the harmonica for fun. One day when Kyle was 10 years old, his father heard harmonica music coming from the front yard. He went outside amazed to find Kyle playing the Blues. In May of 2004, at the age of 10, Kyle was sitting in front of a stage during the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee listening to Mick Martin and The Blues Rockers. Kyle quietly began to play along on his harmonica and when Mick heard Kyle playing he asked him to join the band on stage. This was the beginning of Kyle's venture with the Blues.

Since that day, Kyle has played with some of the Blues greats such as Norton Buffalo, John Mayall, Charlie Musselwhite, John Nemeth, Rusty Zinn and others. Kyle has performed at the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee since 2004, at the California State Fair since 2005, and at various other festivals in California and Nevada. Kyle can be found playing with Mick Martin and The Blues Rockers, Mark Herin and Mere Mortals and other bands around Sacramento most weekends. He also has his own band and has recorded a CD. Although he struggled in school after his mother passed away from breast cancer last year, he has persevered through it all. **He will graduate with -- and perform for -- C.K. McClatchy's Class of 2011 at 7 p.m. on Friday, June 10, at Memorial Auditorium.**

Patricia Lee – Rosemont High School

Patricia Lee is a Rosemont High School high-achiever who has challenged herself with Advanced Placement and Community College classes while maintaining her involvement in orchestra, peer tutoring and debate. Outside of class, she has been a leader on campus in the Environmental Club, Academic Decathlon and California Scholarship Federation to name a few.

In the community, Patricia is a volunteer at the Veteran’s Administration Hospital, holds a job and recently was selected out of approximately 5,000 candidates to be a Bank of America intern where she will attend a week-long Student Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., as a part of an eight-week, paid internship.

All of this excellence has been in opposition to the struggles she has been forced to face having living in a single-parent home. As her mother speaks/writes mostly Korean, Patricia has been the primary connection between her family and the greater community. Patricia will be attending UC Berkley this year to pursue medicine, but will always keep her time in Sacramento in her heart as she comes back to support her younger siblings and honor her mother and grandmother for their sacrifices. **She will be graduating at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 14, at Rosemont High School, 9594 Kiefer Blvd.**

Michell Nguyen – Rosemont High School

In her 13 years as a student, Michell Nguyen has achieved the almost impossible: She has had perfect attendance since kindergarten!

Michell is also an outstanding student and winner of the Lance D. Atkinson Memorial Scholarship, which will pay for her tuition and expenses at Sacramento State, where she will study business administration this fall. Michell has been the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) club president for three years, is a member of California Scholarship Federation (CSF), vice president of the Rosemont Art Club and a youth leader of her Buddhist Youth Group. She also volunteers at the Crocker Art Museum and participates annually in Run to Feed the Hungry. **She will graduate with her class at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 14, at Rosemont.**

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