

Christopher James Goughnour Memorial Scholarship



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Goughnour

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A \$500 scholarship to help with higher education costs will be awarded on September 1, 2020 to a Latin America-born youth graduating from Bryant Alternative High School in Alexandria, Virginia.

This grant is given in memory of Christopher Goughnour, who was born in Brazil and lived with his U.S. foreign service family in several countries prior to graduating from high school and moving to the United States. As a dual U.S.-Brazilian citizen, Chris cherished his international background, but also took enormous pride in serving the United States in both the U.S. Navy --and after college-- as a highly decorated U.S. Army Ranger stationed in Afghanistan. Chris was taken from this world in 2018, having suffered a heart attack while pursuing one of his greatest passions, deep-water diving. His memory lives on in his parents, wife and two children, brothers, and comrades in arms.

"Chris' legacy of love of family and country, respect for diversity, honor, service and sacrifice is an example for Latin American youth pursuing their dreams in the United States of America."



Michael Maxey

Marie Maxey Foundation

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The following essays were submitted for the Chris Goughnour Memorial Scholarship competition. To be eligible to apply, a Latin American origin youth had to be either enrolled or already attending a two or four year college.

Applications were recieved from students from across the United States and the stories they told of overcoming hardships is inspirational. Many of the stories mentioned the importance of faith in God. We believe and we continue see God moving to help children move beyond the difficulties they face. These youth are going to be a strong foundation for a future America, a nation that continues to be a city on a hill -- the last great hope of many and the realization of a dream for many more.

Our journey into becoming a new nation and continuing to be a land of hope is going to depend on the young people whose stories are told in this narrative. They talk about their futures, their dreams and how they will be made real. They have a vision of the future that includes justice, equity and a focus on the common good. Many in our older generation of Americans have dreamed of these changes but these young people will take us there.

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daugthers will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions." Joel 2:28



"A Letter to My Mother"

Jonathan L.

Dear Mami,

Growing up I wanted to be everything. Born and raised in East Harlem, I was exposed to several possible careers that enticed me. A teacher, a mailman, an ice vendor selling ices to kids with a smile - and you, Ma, told me I could do anything.

I guess when you're young, you could be anything you want, but as you get older all of those options start to narrow down. As your perspective on the world changes, so do your passions and aspirations. I was given this world and dealt a hand that I did not choose. I surely didn't choose this world, with all of its flaws and injustices. However, the characteristics you've given me allowed me to embrace this cruel world.

You told me that dad wasn't there in the delivery room. You told me that things were never easy. Now on the precipice of my young adult years, I understand that raising two bad kids to be caring, passionate, and gracious men without paternal help must have seemed impossible at times.

Words can't explain how much I admire you. You kept going even when dad left us when I was just two years old. I wish I could take the sadness away from those painful nights you had - however, though your resilience, you showed me that if I can make it through the night there's always a brighter day. The sacrifice you made for us to just keep a smile on our faces is what keeps me going when I want to give up.

Our culture, brought by you from Mexico, has allowed me to experience love. I've heard racist jokes at school about Mexicans having more than five cousins, but I pay them no mind because family is the most important thing to me. I haven't lost touch with my green, white, and red flag - even while surrounded by the hatred people harbor for my homeland. Keeping the love for our culture that you passed down to me is important; it's the key to fighting the hate in this world.

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Everything I do is to give you the “better future” immigrants yearn for when coming to the United States of America. Although you’re happy with what you have, like every other mama’s boy I want to give you more. Seeing you sick and in pain has sparked my interest in medicine.

It’s awful that help isn’t given to people based on their citizenship status. I want to give back to people no matter their class, race, or status. You are the most important woman in my life and I’m going to strive until I get to see the world the way you pictured when moving to this country. That’s my goal, making you proud, you gave me this push, I have to finish strong. If I fail, I won’t be a free man dying.

Ain’t a woman alive that could take my mama’s place, thank you for the extra love.

Best,

Flacko [Jonathan L]



"My Grandmother"

Catalina C.

Despite being only twenty years old, I feel that I have experienced a plethora of hardships and as of recently, I have had a major realization of the importance of utilizing hardship and pain as a personal tool to become stronger physically, mentally, and spiritually as an outcome. Strength has always been an evident symbol that I remember growing up with and being reminded of, stemming ultimately from my grandmother Emily.

My grandmother is the most generous, selfless, and beautiful individual I have the blessing of being raised and inspired by every day. My grandmother experienced changes quite often from a mere young age, with immigrant parents making the life changing move from Mexico to California. With new life and opportunity being a part of such a grand move like this, it was quite the opposite for my grandmother who had to experience the feeling and epitome of grief with the sudden death of her father.

Growing up with two sisters, my grandmother was constantly sharing, protecting, and providing at a young age and these qualities blossomed and continued within her transition into adulthood. When my grandmother became a mother, she received little support back from her spouse, leaving her to cook, clean, watch, and provide for not one but three children in unfavorable living conditions. Despite each and every hardship, she was faced with not only being a single mother of three but in addition, the death of her sister due to cancer which left her bearing the responsibility of taking in her 11 nieces and nephews as her own.

My grandmother Emily has not only made a difference in the lives of her children and nieces and nephews, but in her entire community as well. My grandmother is by far the best cook and baker I have ever had the privilege of knowing, with many of her talents consisting of her famous red chile, tamales, or tortillas to name a few, and even cakes for every event that occurs in the town that she resides in. Whether it be an old friend's birthday or a funeral for a total stranger, my grandmother bears food or beverages to make the simplest gesture of support when people need it most.

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In addition to supporting her community, my grandmother has guided and cared for the local youth when working as a janitor at the local high school, guiding and taking care of students that attended, not solely to make extra pocket money but to be a guiding for high-schoolers that might not have had such support in their own homes.

My grandmother is the strongest individual I have ever met, whether it be her personality or how she has handled each and every obstacle that has stepped in her path of life. My grandfather Emily is truly my best friend and I am so thankful to have been raised with her guidance and positive outlook on life that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.



"The Most Important Woman in My Life"

Adriana R.

The most important Hispanic woman in my life is hard to choose between my mother and my grandmother but I will choose my grandmother. I have admired her so much ever since a little girl. She came from Guanajuato Mexico when my mom was five years old as immigrants. I look up to her so much because she came to the U.S. risking her life to give her family and future grandchildren a better life, not knowing English or having a house or money yet she risked all of it and I will forever admire her for that.

My mom had me when she was 15 years old so while my mom attended high school my grandparents would watch me. Growing up I can say my grandmother treated me like her own kid, she fed me, read to me books in Spanish so I could stay in touch with my culture, and raised me with morals and love.

This scholarship will help me pay my loan for the Associate Degree in Nursing program so I can set an example for my younger siblings and cousins that you can accomplish anything you want -- it doesn't matter where you come from or the color of your skin.

My grandmother told me the story of how she crossed the border and why. She said it was nearly impossible to live in Mexico and how everyone is so poor there but are happy regardless of how much money they have. My grandfather literally crossed the border with a guy they call him the "coyote" which for them is someone who they pay money to lead them across the border for days and nights in the hot desert. It's very dangerous because of the hot weather with no food or water, a lot of people don't make it all the way or die or risk getting caught.

My grandmother on the other hand didn't go with the coyote, at the time she crossed it wasn't as strict -- all you had to show was a birth certificate. So, they paid a lady who had kids and my grandmother with all my aunts crossed the border by car.

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I will be forever grateful my family came to America. I don't know how my life would be if I grew up in a country like Mexico. I want this scholarship to go towards my school as it will be a great help and in a way I can repay my grandparents because I know the day I become a nurse it won't only be mine, but it will also be the happiest day in their lives.

Although my whole family eventually became U.S. citizens, it took years and a lot of money. My family isn't rich now but we have all we need and we are very close. I would love to set an example for all my cousins and my baby sister and younger brother. I would be so grateful for anything that can help me get closer to my goal.



"My Mother" Isamery L.

Let me tell you how a 50-year old Guatemalan woman decided to change her five children's future to be full of responsibilities by single-handedly packing her bags and making a new life as an immigrant family in Massachusetts.

She started out with not enough money, no knowledge of the English language, and without any valuable possessions in this country. Yet, somehow she always found a way to bring food to the table and smile through her adversities, always being a ray of hope for her children.

I am forever thankful to her for fighting for my well being all this time and one of the different ways that I can show my gratitude is to try to be at least half of what she was to me towards other people in need. I strive to not only be a successful and strong woman like she is but to also be that same ray of hope to the world.

To show others to be proud of their Hispanic heritage like she always taught me and to do whatever it takes to achieve whatever it is that we desire. I want the whole world to see me as a reflection of her one day and to always be there with a smile no matter how bad things get.

To this day, it still blows my mind all the sacrifices my mother has made, she keeps on teaching me to be someone good in this big world of negativity and hatred and that one small act of kindness can start a spark in one person and light a fire in a group of people.

Her tenacious ways of one day having her children be what she wished she once could be and her irrefutable love for her family was all it took for her to continue along such a harsh path. Six years later and she still shows that same determination along with a loving and caring smile. A smile that reminds me that this woman is the most important Hispanic woman in the world.

The Most Important Person in My Life?

Maryann C.

One individual who is the most important person in my life and has had an impact on me would be my Mother. My mother raised me by herself as a single mother. Growing up I watched her struggle for years with no help from my father or family . My mom did the best she could to take care of me.

During the summer time and holidays it wasn't always exciting how your average little kid would be on Christmas or New Year's, It was more so sad because at such a young age I didn't fully understand the in's and out's of everything that was going on.

Bills needing to be paid, insurance needing to be kept up, personal care needing to be paid for, food and clothes -- it was hard especially on me because I did not understand anything but my mom would explain to me at ages five, six, seven, and eight the best way she could that things will change and that God would get us through each season he puts us through because trouble don't last always.

My mom sacrificed alot for me and went out her way multiple times for me. One thing I can NEVER look over is the fact that despite the ups and downs of my mom and I hardships .. she still managed to keep her job that she's been working at for twenty nine years. Never not once did my mom lose her job or even think about quitting her job or leaving me to give me away because everything was hard.

My mom cried out for help so much and not one person genuinely helped my mom, she had small help but people really didn't want to help from there heart as time went on, including my father.

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Fast forward into 2020 ... My Mother and I have come an extremely long way from such a long exhausting struggle from years 2004-2015. We're talking about almost eleven years of perseverance here from a single mother. No one can tell me that my mother isn't a walking testimony and an independent woman who went above and beyond for her and I.

For four years we didn't have our own anything but God saw, heard our cry and made a way for his children because of the faith we had in him. I'm not lucky, I'm blessed. Now I'm a Sophomore in college majoring in Chemistry with a concentration in Biochemistry to pursue my career in pediatrics specializing in becoming a Pediatric Gastroenterologist and OBGYN. The reason for entering my particular field is because I have a heart for health care and children.

Overall, thanks to my mom encouraging, preserving, showing me I must succeed as bad as I want to breathe and that I have what it takes to do anything through Christ who strengthens me by becoming a doctor not only means alot but that's my mom and I'm blessed to have her as a mother, role model, strong support system and best friend.

