

GoFundMe Awards \$100,000 in College Scholarships to 10 Promising Students

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., October 20, 2016 -- GoFundMe, the world's largest social fundraising platform, today announced the ten recipients of the first GoFundMe Scholarship program, giving a total of \$100,000 toward their education. Each of the ten students will be awarded \$10,000 to help pay for their college expenses.

To qualify for the scholarship, each student created a GoFundMe campaign, sharing personal stories of obstacles they've overcome in pursuing their education, how they've demonstrated character, and what winning the scholarship would mean to them with the hashtag #GFMScholarship. In just a week, the contest had more than 600 campaigns raise over \$200,000 towards college expenses.

"We're proud and excited to help these remarkable, determined students achieve their educational dreams," said Rob Solomon, GoFundMe CEO. "All of us here have been touched by the stories shared by the scholarship winners, and we can't wait to see how they'll continue to give back to their communities."

The ten GoFundMe scholarship winners come from different backgrounds and have unique life goals, but all have been determined to get an education despite challenges that have come their way. From Emettra, a single mother who went back to school and is finishing up her senior year to Alan, who went from a life of gang violence to college dean's list.

Over the past several years, students, teachers, and parents are increasingly turning to GoFundMe to raise money for education expenses, including tuition. In fact, in the last two years, over \$100 million has been raised on GoFundMe for education related campaigns, making it the fastest growing category on the platform.

Here are the winners of this year's GoFundMe Scholarship:

Aubriana Mency is attending Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. When she was in second grade her father died of bone cancer, and she and her mother became homeless. Without a reliable home, the Boston native missed several months of school, but made a promise to both of her parents that she would always work hard in school. Mency received a scholarship from Hampshire that will pay for her first year in full, but she's raising money on GoFundMe to help with additional expenses in the years to come.

Pauline Muturi came to the U.S. with her family from East Africa 19 years ago, and despite their struggles, her parents taught her the importance of perseverance and the value of getting an education. Pauline is a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) student and is not eligible for federal financial aid. She is currently attending Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee, and while she works two jobs and maintains a 3.56 GPA, she worries if she'll be able to stay.

Emettra Nelson is a single mother in her final year at Michigan State with only 19 credit hours between her and a degree in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Currently living in East Lansing, she recently learned she was not awarded the financial aid that she's had in previous years. While she works part-time, the money she makes is not enough to cover tuition. Emettra turned to GoFundMe to get to the finish line and make her daughter proud.

Amir Fluellen's father has been incarcerated since before Amir could walk. The Philadelphia native is starting his freshman year at Salisbury University in Maryland. He and his two brothers were raised primarily by his mother, and at age 5, Amir made a promise to his parents that he would graduate from college. He was well on his way until his mother was diagnosed with cancer. Though she has recovered, the financial burden of her illness limited his family's ability to help him pay for college. Amir, an avid lacrosse player, turned to GoFundMe for help.

Alyssa Wray is an honor student who graduated high school with a 4.01 GPA. Wray has always prioritized her education and was excited to attend Virginia Tech this fall. When her sister contracted a rare "flesh-eating" bacterial infection, which requires someone to be with her 24 hours a day, Alyssa and her family focused on her sister's recovery. Medical bills have taken a toll on the family, so Alyssa turned to GoFundMe to help with tuition for her first year at Virginia Tech.

Alan Gonez loved school when he was younger, but after getting mixed up with the wrong crowd in middle school, and losing his close friends in gang shootings, Alan moved to a different school. It was there he joined the P.R.I.D.E program and turned his life around, raising his GPA from 1.8 to 3.8. After high school, Alan attended Cerritos Community College where he obtained a 4.0 GPA and made the Dean's List his last two semesters. Along with his full school load, he pursued extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities to give back to his community. Alan is now attending UCLA studying Geography.

Bezaleel (Bez) Balan was born in the Philippines and grew up in Guam. Her family then moved to San Francisco so she could pursue her college education. Her parents did cooking, cleaning, and construction jobs to support her undergraduate education at University of San Francisco, where she graduated magna cum laude. Bez is now in her final year of graduate school at the UCLA College of Architecture and Urban Design. Bez has designed an elementary school in Sudan and orphanages in Haiti. She works multiple jobs and maintains straight As in hopes of continuing to pay it forward.

Sandy Gonzalez moved to the U.S. from Mexico at age 6, only to be abandoned by her mother. Her grandmother, an immigrant herself, fought to become her legal guardian and get Sandy permanent residency so she could stay in the U.S. and continue her education. Sandy is the first person in her family to attend college and is a sophomore at California Lutheran University with a GPA of 3.7. In three years, Gonzalez will be able to apply for citizenship and will also help her grandmother become a citizen. Sandy says she wants to help those in need so that they never have to feel alone in a big world like she did. She plans to go on to get her PhD in Psychology.

Mayia Vranas was diagnosed with Tourette's and OCD in the 3rd grade. Despite her disability, Mayia stayed focused and graduated with straight As. She's now attending UC Berkeley, where she is studying physics and is the Co-VP of the Society for Physics Students. Because of her disability, Mayia cannot maintain a job on top of her academic schedule, but needs to take an extra semester for her courses. She plans to go on to graduate school in physics to receive her Ph.D., which she has dreamed of doing since she was a young girl.

Thayne Yazzie grew up on a Navajo reservation without running water or electricity. When he was a child, he had an emergency where he was airlifted out of the remote area and rushed to a hospital. If not for that flight, he wouldn't have received the necessary medical treatment. He realized then that he wanted to help the Navajo Nation by giving them more access to healthcare and get a Medevac certification. He graduated from Western Washington University, moved back home to teach at his childhood school and is now at Eastern New Mexico University working towards his flight certification. Thayne is also a talented artist, and for each donation he received on his GoFundMe campaign he sent a piece of his art.

About GoFundMe

Launched in 2010, GoFundMe is the world's largest online fundraising platform, with over \$3 billion raised so far. With a community of more than 25 million donors, GoFundMe is changing the way the world gives.

Contact: press@gofundme.com

###

ABOUT GOFUNDME

GoFundMe is the world's largest online fundraising platform.



GoFundMeneWSroom