



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Scholarships open doors for two students enrolled in SWWDC's youth program

The Young Professionals of Vancouver hosted its first annual Reach for the Stars scholarship dinner and silent auction on Saturday, November 15 at the Downtown Vancouver Hilton. The event raised more than \$8,000 to fund two college scholarships for low-income youth enrolled in the Youth Workforce Program (YWP), which is funded by SWWDC and administered by Educational Service District 112 (ESD 112). Sponsors included: American Paper Converting, Bay Bank, Eric Fuller & Associates, iQ credit Union, NIES Insurance, Pacific Continental Bank, Peterson & Associates, Robertson & Olson Construction, Willamette University MBA.

The YPOV scholarships provide assistance to Clark County youth who do not otherwise have adequate resources to attend college and who have overcome significant barriers to achieve academic success.

The 2008 scholarship winners Ashley George and Brandon Nicholson were in attendance at the dinner and presented their future plans to the audience.

Ashley George struggled in school from the time she was a preteen. After transitioning between multiple schools and programs, she joined YWP. Working with her Youth Workforce Specialist, Ashley was able to graduate from high school one day before her 21st birthday and participate in the Youth Workforce Healthcare Academy at Southwest Washington Medical Center. She is now enrolled at Clark College, while also working part-time, on her way to becoming an X-Ray technician.

Brandon Nicholson was an up and coming basketball player in Colorado whose athletic career was cut short by a terrible car accident. After recovering from the accident, he moved to Vancouver. Through Battle Ground's Summit View High School and the YWP, Brandon graduated from Summit View last June and was placed in the summer Youth Workforce Business and Technology Academy. There he gained work experience in various administrative and business departments at the Washington State Department of Transportation. This experience made Brandon realize he wanted to pursue a career in business, and he is enrolling at Clark College for winter term.

Both George and Nicholson were selected for the scholarship on the basis of their character, the steps they have taken to overcome barriers, their academic record, and their motivation. They also met YPOV's criteria that they be enrolled in the YWP and participating in the active phase of the program at the time of scholarship award, have a diploma or GED, and reside in Clark County with intention to continue their education at an accredited two-year or four-year college or university, full-time, beginning 2009.

YPOV President Tina Vlachos said, "We are proud of our 2008 scholarship winners for their significant accomplishments. And, we are happy to partner with SWWDC and YWP to continue to grow and develop the Vancouver workforce. Our youth scholarships are a wonderful way to do this"

About YPOV

The Young Professionals of Vancouver was established to provide a place where young professionals can connect with other young professionals. The 600 plus member group hosts monthly meetings on the first Wednesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. at a local hot spot. The meetings are open, friendly, straight forward networking with other professionals that are passionate about what they do.

The YPOV, as young professionals and future business leaders of Southwest Washington, is committed to the continued growth and development of the Vancouver workforce. The first annual Reach for the Stars fundraising event will provide much needed educational and career development opportunities for those in our community.

About SWWDC

The SWWDC's mission is to provide economic development through a trained and productive workforce in Southwest Washington. To that end, the SWWDC creates partnerships between business and educational organizations, supports training programs and creates a system whereby employers can find qualified employees and employees can find careers at which they will excel.

The SWWDC uses financial resources from the Workforce Investment Act to fund the Youth Workforce Program. This federal program supports the mission of both the SWWDC and the Youth Workforce Program.

About the Youth Workforce Program

The Youth Workforce Program, operated by Educational Service District 112, is an innovative youth development program designed to improve education and employment outcomes for youth ages 16-21. It combines employment training with academic support to assist young people from Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties as they finish their high school education and begin thinking about their future.

Emphasis and resources are targeted at providing youth the assistance they need to graduate from high school, earn their GED, and/or move on to college or trade school. Most youth remain in the program for 9 to 18 months, gaining additional education

through classes, academic support, job counseling and training, and real world work experience.

Eligible youth are between 16 and 21 years of age, are low income, and meet one of the following criteria: basic skills deficient, school drop-out or truant, homeless/runaway or foster youth, pregnant or parenting youth, have a mental or physical disability, drug/alcohol affected, offender/involved with the justice system, or have other serious barriers to employment.