



ALMANAC



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Upward Scholars helps adult immigrants succeed in college

by Linda Prieto

Since 2010, Upward Scholars has helped adult immigrants enrolled in community college in San Mateo County further their education and improve their financial futures by offering them academic, financial and social support. Whether we're providing a student with a free laptop, a dedicated tutor or a listening ear, we help hundreds of students a year — including many in Menlo Park — while also enlisting the support of hundreds more community members as volunteers and donors.

One student we've helped is Griselda, a Guatemalan immigrant, mother and dean's list member who has been an Upward Scholars student since 2015. Like many, she works a low-wage job in the very expensive county we call home. A Redwood City resident and a business student at Ca?ada College, Upward Scholars has provided her with textbooks, a parking pass, and tutoring in her challenging classes — and a nonstop cheerleader during the struggles and rewards of school. Her academic achievements have garnered her recognition as an honor roll student and induction into the PTK (Phi Theta Kappa) Honors Society.

Griselda's goal is to own her own business one day. But she says that already, "Upward Scholars has changed my life" by supporting her step by step, even during the dark and challenging days of the COVID pandemic. This past spring, she earned an associate's degree from Ca?ada College in Spanish as well as a certificate in Spanish: Bilingualism & Bilingualism in English/Spanish with honors (magna cum laude). She is currently finishing an associate degree in business administration and applying to transfer to a four-year university.

"Not having my parents and other family here is very difficult, so support from non-blood family and relatives, such as Upward Scholars, is very special," Griselda said. "Just being able to communicate in English makes me feel better and happy, so I want to give a lot of credit to my supporters who believe in and guide me. I have been able to find a second home and family here, and I wish this for all other immigrants."

To see Griselda herself talking about what the Upward Scholars community meant to her, go to tinyurl.com/HF-griselda.

If you want to help us, we want you! We need tutors, office helpers, event planners, mentors and general do-gooders. You can find out more about our work at upwardscholars.org or call Lilliam Castellanos at 650-254-6178.

Griselda tells us, "You motivate me to think big!" But we can only think big because of our volunteers' big hearts and our donors' generous support — and supporters like The Almanac Holiday Fund.

Upward Scholars is one of the beneficiaries of The Almanac's Holiday Fund. The Almanac and its partner, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, cover all the administrative costs, so every dollar raised goes directly to this year's 10 nonprofit organizations. Donations to the Holiday Fund can be made at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

Linda Prieto, Ph.D., is the executive director of Upward Scholars.

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