

PURSUING DREAMS WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE GIVING FUND

BY KATIE VENI, GIVING FUND COMMITTEE MEMBER

Last month, we introduced you to some of the past Tahoe Donner Giving Fund scholarship recipients. This month, we present our 2017 recipients.

The hopes and dreams of two motivated and deserving Truckee high school graduates are coming closer to reality thanks in part to Tahoe Donner Giving Fund scholarships for 2017.

JANET DIAZ Teen moms face big challenges, but that doesn't stop Sierra High graduate Janet Diaz from pursuing her dream. Janet's son Rafael Ezra was born April 3, the very day her scholarship application was due. Being granted flexibility on the deadline, Janet came through with her inspiring appeal and we were moved.

With our \$2,000 scholarship, she'll be able to attend Sierra College in Truckee and work toward her dream of working as a counselor. "Sierra High is giving me the support and opportunity to take care of my child for the next 3 years for free and I plan on using that time to go to school and get a degree in Psychology or Early Childhood Development. As a teenage mom I have been through a lot and will use my experience to help children or families in my community. I will show my son that you can accomplish your dreams no matter what."

Janet is clearly grateful for the scholarship. "I want to say thank you to the Tahoe Donner Giving Fund for making this possible. The scholarship is a huge help, because I don't have enough resources to pay totally on my own."



Janet Diaz and son. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Jensen.



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Luis Valdez with Katie Veni. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Jensen.

LUIS VALDEZ

Truckee High School grad, Luis Valdez has long dreamt of being an auto mechanic and will begin in the Automotive Technology Program at Sierra College in Rocklin this Fall.

Life's challenges haven't gotten the better of this hopeful young man either. His father abandoned his

family when Luis was barely four. His mom worked two jobs to support Luis and his sisters. Luis showed his appreciation by maintaining good grades in school, playing several seasons of football and soccer, and all the while working up to two jobs.

His dream of becoming a master mechanic is rooted in experience. "When I was younger and my mom's car would break down, sometimes I thought the people she took her cars to were not honest. I want to be of help to others so they will be safe on the road and I want to be honest and reliable so anyone who comes to me will know that they can trust me."

Luis is grateful for all the forces that have come together for him. "I give credit to my mom and sisters for the support that they have given me through the years. I also appreciate my current boss, J.R. Thompson, for inspiring me and giving me the opportunity to work in his shop, Hy-Tech Auto."

Tahoe Donner Association Board President Jeff Bonzon said he was excited to learn about this year's scholarship winners. "They are outstanding choices," Bonzon said. "Those striving to put themselves in a position to better their lives are the types of students that we should be helping—young people whose lives can truly be changed by even our small level of support."

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