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# Latino students receive college scholarship funds

ERNST LAMOTHE JR. • STAFF WRITER • JUNE 14, 2009

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Benjamin Lee Dick always understood the value of a good education, but it wasn't until he started looking for colleges that he learned that value was going to come at a price; a very high one.

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That is why he is thankful community organizations work with young students to help them get a financial leg up.

More than \$1.3 million in scholarships was awarded to 35 Rochester-area Hispanic students Saturday at the 14th Annual Gala and Scholarship Awards at the Hyatt Regency Rochester.

This year's recipients trace their roots to Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Puerto Rico. The scholarships came from an array of sources, including the Hispanic Scholarship Endowment Fund, Rochester Hispanic Business Association and several anonymous donors.

"I was just shell shocked at how much it cost go to college," said Dick, 17, of Bloomfield, who will study chemical engineering at the University of Rochester this fall and received more than \$88,000 in scholarships. "I didn't want to put a lot of financial burden on my family, so any scholarship I receive will be helpful."

Standing in the corner in a long black dress, Lauren Lopez mingled with other award winners and soaked up the night. Planning to major in economics, inspired by her senior project of helping Spry Middle School eighth-graders learn the basics, she said she was overwhelmed about receiving the recognition.

"It does mean more to be honored by your community and know there are people willing to help young people out," said Lopez, 18, of Webster, who will attend Ohio State University and received more than \$124,000.

Beaming mother Julie Lopez couldn't contain her excitement.

"The one thing that makes me proud is that she has always been a hard worker, ever since elementary school, so to see her honored this way just confirms that she truly earned it," she said.

The scholarship award took on a different meaning for Talia Yvette Gonzalez, a senior at Greece Arcadia High School. Although she appreciated the money that will help lessen the cost of attending the State University College at Brockport in the fall, it wasn't the sole honor of the night.

"I have a lot of pride in my Hispanic background and for me to be surrounded by so many people who also have that pride is very important to me," said Gonzalez, 18, who plans to study journalism.

Tony and Terry Correa, whose son Christopher will attend Rochester Institute Technology to study management informational systems, hope similar scholarship events allow more students to be honored every year and that it creates a trend.

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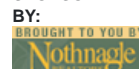
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"This could be a full circle situation where young, talented students use these funds to help them get a great higher [education](#), and they come back and give back to the community, the same community that helped them get their start in life," Tony Correa said.

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