


# Scholarship Newsletter



**“Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.”**

Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela said that, “Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.” These famous words are not just philosophies held by millions, but inspiration for young people around the globe to rise to the challenge to make a difference.

The California Strawberry Scholarship Program, now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year of awarding scholarships to the children of strawberry field workers, is on a mission to help hundreds of students pursue their dreams through college education.

To date, the two existing programs: the California Strawberry Scholarship Program and the California Strawberry Growers’ Scholarship Fund, have awarded 850 students a total of \$997,425. The California Strawberry Commission, along with the California strawberry industry and affiliates who make this program possible, share the privilege of witnessing first-hand the success stories connected to this program.

Since the inception of the award’s program, we have seen young people, who initially thought their dreams could only be imagined, graduate with bachelor’s, master’s and PhD degrees from colleges and universities around the country. Today, countless young people are pursuing their passions and working as professionals, such as teachers, doctors, nurses and engineers – across a variety of industries. And most importantly, a majority of them are returning to their communities to help others pursue similar opportunities.

It is deeply rewarding to demonstrate the industry’s appreciation for the invaluable contributions farm workers make by granting scholarships to their children. It is our hope that these young people go on to fulfill one dream after another – and that they can use education as a tool to change the world.

- Cecil Martinez, President  
California Strawberry Growers’  
Scholarship Fund

## Alejandra Huerta



**N**ot long ago, Alejandra Huerta was a small town girl with big dreams. Today she is a well-educated, well-traveled woman, well on her way to fulfilling her ultimate

dream to earn her PhD in Plant Pathology.

The journey that led Alejandra to this point hasn't been an easy one – but one that has deeply motivated her and provided her with life-long values such as gratitude, hard work, and the importance of giving back to the community. She also feels strongly about being a role model for other young Hispanic girls who may feel limited by some societal stereotypes that exist today. This is especially close to Alejandra's heart since she has experienced these attitudes first-hand and hopes to make a difference for younger generations, one graduate at a time, starting first with herself.

Alejandra has already earned a BA in Spanish and Portuguese from UC Santa Barbara and a BS in Chemistry from UC Santa Cruz. But that's just the beginning for this student. This year she will enter a PhD program in Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin to start working toward her next goal to become a researcher and professor.

Being raised in the agriculture-rich Salinas Valley by parents who worked in strawberry fields, Alejandra has a strong appreciation for the hard work and dedication that goes into farming. This background provided the impetus behind her insatiable hunger to learn more, as well as her desire to be part of the agriculture industry. Ultimately, her goal is to make an impact on current and future efforts to protect food availability for human and animal consumption with minimal impact to the environment.

Alejandra has already begun to prove herself as a scientist. For example, as a Biological Science Aid during an internship with the USDA, she contributed to the identification of a bacterial

pathogen that affects strawberry flowers. She also worked in a plant disease ecology lab where she studied how fungal plant pathogens contribute in maintaining forest diversity.

The same journey that is leading Alejandra down the path of education has also instilled in her some life lessons along the way. For example, she's learned it's important to speak up if you want to be heard, and that dreams are achieved by hard work. She also believes that it is important to be grateful and help others along their path of self discovery.

After Alejandra earns her PhD, she plans to return to her roots to “water more tiny dreams that may sprout to be the next great scientist.”

## Araceli Flores



**T**he road to success isn't always an easy one, but one that Araceli Flores says is worth every effort. The single mother of a nine-year old son, this young woman has

already earned a bachelor's degree in Law and Society and is working as a fourth-grade teacher. She credits her education thus far for the privilege to teach young children.

Determined to be a positive role model for others – particularly for her son and her students – Araceli doesn't believe in

setting limits. Her motto is to “dream big” because she believes that anything in life can be accomplished if one sets their mind to it, and is willing to put in the hard work.

For Araceli, her mind is set on becoming the kind of teacher that inspires learning in an enjoyable atmosphere. To accomplish this, she is continuing her education at Azusa Pacific University, pursuing a master's degree in education. This is important from Araceli's perspective because she feels strongly that education not only increases knowledge and career opportunities, but also has the potential to help diminish violence in the world.

At the heart of those feelings is the loss that Araceli and her family experienced when her brother – a father of young

twins – was killed because of a senseless act. Although tragic and overwhelmingly painful, Araceli chooses to not let struggles get in the way of her dreams. Ultimately she hopes to inspire others to do the same, just as her parents and family members inspired her.

For example, her mother and father immigrated to California when they were young adults to raise children who could pursue their dreams. Knowing the value of a college education, they encouraged their children and provided unwavering support down that very path. Today, Araceli is the fifth child in her family to graduate from college.

## Javier Gonzalez-Rocha



As the world rapidly changes around us, Javier Gonzales-Rocha has a vision to be part of the next generation of engineers and scientists to shape the technological

advances of tomorrow.

A child of a farm-working family, Javier thought that becoming an engineer would only be a dream. But today, Javier is a mechanical engineering student at California State University Sacramento in the midst of making that very dream a reality. On the heels of obtaining a bachelor's degree, he plans to go on to earn a master's in Aerospace Engineering.

As an undergraduate student, Javier is currently working on a research project that will be presented to the National Aeronautical and Space Agency (NASA) in Fall 2009. He is filled with gratitude that he can participate in these types of opportunities and credits his supporters – especially his family – for being instrumental in getting him to this point. In turn, he wants to help make it possible for others to seize similar opportunities.

Acting on that passion, Javier is an up and coming leader making a difference – especially through community involvement – which is increasingly becoming a cornerstone of Javier's life. While serving as president of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), he formed coalitions with industry leaders and global corporations and agencies such as IBM, Intel and NASA to assist in community outreach efforts. Additionally,

he established a junior chapter of the SHPE at a local high school to promote higher education, as well as professional and personal growth, particularly to Hispanic youth. This is important to Javier because it's something that he feels was lacking during his own high school years.

Javier says that his passion for leadership is "not inspired by a title, but the satisfaction realized by helping others." A young man with seasoned values, Javier attributes his passion and drive to his role models – his parents and grandparents – who worked tirelessly in the fields, rising at 5:00 a.m. and sometimes working until sunset. He has a strong desire to "honor their struggles with an education, because in life you can lose countless jobs, but you can't lose your education."



## Why Contribute Year After Year?

*"Contributing to the California Strawberry Scholarship Program is a great way to give back to the community and to show appreciation for the employees of strawberry growers. Eclipse Berry Farms is pleased to be part of the ongoing effort by the industry to provide more opportunities for young people to earn degrees and progress in their lives."*

- Norman Gilfenbain, Eclipse Berry Farms

*"We are firm believers in giving back to the community and are happy to provide continued support to the California Strawberry Scholarship Program. As a strawberry growing operation for 25 years in Ventura County, we recognize the importance of dedicated farm workers who make it possible to deliver strawberries to tables across the country. This program is a way to show appreciation - and a great resource for our employees' children to pursue a college education."*

- John Dullam, Mandalay Berry Farms

*"Marinovich Cold Storage, Inc. is proud to be a sponsor of the California Strawberry Scholarship Program. As a third generation, family-owned and operated agricultural business, our family shares a deep pride in the entire industry. It gives us great pleasure to give back to the community of farm workers that help make our business a success. In today's world, a college education is more important than ever as it serves as a gateway to more opportunities to succeed."*

- DeeAnn Hartzell, Marinovich Cold Storage, Inc.

*"Quality Packaging and Supplies has been a sponsor of the Strawberry Scholarship Program for years. We continue to participate because of the admiration we have for ambitious students who want to pursue a higher education. Each year, we're always moved at the award ceremonies as we hear the students share their inspiring testimonies. It's a wonderful way to say thank you for the hard work and dedication of the strawberry farm workers."*

- Doug Baisch, Quality Packaging and Supplies

*"When I drive into work on San Juan Road early weekday mornings, I see hundreds of hard-working field workers harvesting strawberries. By supporting the California Strawberry Growers Scholarship Fund, I'm helping a field worker's child pursue a college education. It's a good feeling."*

- Steve Taylor, Taylor's Office City



# Thank you!

## **Ph. D. Level \$10,000 and up**

California Strawberry Growers'  
Scholarship Fund Golf Tournament  
Watsonville, CA

Strawberry Growers of  
Southern California  
Irvine, CA

## **Master's Degree Level \$5,000 and up**

California Strawberry Festival  
Oxnard, CA

Driscoll Strawberry Associates'  
Charitable Fund  
Watsonville, CA

Sweet Darling Sales, Inc.  
Aptos, CA

The J.M. Smucker Company  
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## **Bachelor's Degree Level \$3,000 and up**

Well-Pict Berries, Inc.  
Watsonville, CA

## **Junior Level \$1,500 and up**

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Watsonville, CA

Eclipse Berry Farms, Inc.  
Los Angeles, CA

Fujishige Farms, Inc.  
Irvine, CA

Superior Cooling  
Oxnard, CA

TransFresh Corporation  
Salinas, CA

## **Sophomore Level \$1,000 and up**

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Colleen Strawberries  
Watsonville, CA

Barry & Kimbra Johnson  
Salinas, CA

Mandalay Berry Farms  
Oxnard, CA

Manzanita Berry Farms  
Santa Maria, CA

Marinovich Cold Storage, Inc.  
Watsonville, CA

MIP-CO Ag Plastics  
San Luis Obispo, CA

Naturipe Berry Growers  
Salinas, CA

North River Ranch  
Santa Ana, CA

Orange County Produce  
Irvine, CA

Red Blossom Farms, Inc.  
Santa Ynez, CA

Royal Oaks Farms, LLC  
Watsonville, CA

The Norton Foundation  
Phoenix, AZ

## **Freshman Level \$500 and up**

Anacapa Foods  
Watsonville, CA

Bayview Berry Farms, LLC  
Oxnard, CA

Beach Street Farms  
Watsonville, CA

Beach Street Sales  
Watsonville, CA

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Oxnard, CA

Ernie & Kathy Farley  
Watsonville, CA

Garroutte Farms, Inc.  
Watsonville, CA

Granite Contruction  
Watsonville, CA

Katherine Wendy Hanes  
Sonoma, CA

Lassen Canyon Nursery, Inc.  
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Otilio Farms, LP  
Oxnard, CA

Porter Ranches  
Watsonville, CA

Quality Packaging & Supplies, Inc.  
Oxnard, CA

Rain for Rent  
Bakersfield, CA



Diploma

Sambrailo Packaging  
Watsonville, CA

Santa Maria Fairpark  
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Soilfume, Inc.  
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The Driscoll Family  
Aptos, CA

Watsonville Berry Co-op  
Watsonville, CA

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Crown Nursery, LLC  
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### **In-Kind Donation Professional Services**

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## **Support the California Strawberry Scholarship Program**

Paying for college isn't always easy – especially in these challenging economic times. We invite you to help make the dream of a college degree a reality for students of strawberry field workers by donating to this worthy cause.

Your contribution can help young people make a positive difference in the fields they enter and the communities they come from. Industry affiliates and organizations, local businesses, and individuals are encouraged to donate to this effort. All contributions are tax-deductible. For more information, please contact Diana Garcia at [dgarcia@calstrawberry.org](mailto:dgarcia@calstrawberry.org).

