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Mi Casa Youth Program Participant/Employee Receives Daniels Fund Scholarship

DENVER (June 15, 2009) – Mi Casa Resource Center is delighted to announce that one of our promising youth leaders – Samuel Granados – has been chosen to receive a college scholarship from the Daniels Fund. Sam, who recently graduated from North High School, will attend the University of Denver.

Sam is the third Mi Casa youth staffer in as many years to receive the prestigious scholarship. His sister Jacquie Granados was named a Daniels Scholar in 2008, as was David Cenicerros, another Mi Casa youth program participant and leader, in 2007.

Sam got involved in Mi Casa's after-school youth development program as a sixth grader at Lake Middle School. His grades and motivation were both pretty low, so Sam was referred into Mi Casa's CASASTART intensive case management program for students at risk for truancy, violence or delinquency. With support from his mentor and the rest of the staff at the Mi Casa after-school program, Sam's grades improved and hints of his tremendous talents began to emerge.

Sam was selected to participate in Mi Casa's Leadership for Community Change (LCC) project, sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which brings youth and adults together for regular meetings with the objective of finding innovative solutions to community problems. Impressed with Sam's quick intellect and easy ability to establish personal connections with other students, Mi Casa hired Sam when he was 15 as general support staff for the LCC project. That was four years ago, and since that time Sam has proven himself to be a highly perceptive and empathetic leader of youth and adults alike.

"Sam has always been aware of his impact as a role model, and I have watched him over and over again guide people to positive community action," says Ginger Alferos, Mi Casa's Manager of Youth Programs. "Sam's dedication and creativity energize everyone around him. He is one of our strongest leaders - a willing and gifted mentor to other youth in the community."

The Mi Casa LCC group works to make the community safer for children and as the Youth Evaluator for the project, Sam plays a major role in coordinating the group's activities. One of Sam's community projects involved negotiating with the owner of an adult entertainment store located near his home and around the corner from an elementary school and after-school program. Concerned about the business' harmful impact on children in the area, "we went to City Council to see if we could force the owner to relocate," Sam says. "When that didn't work we approached him about remodeling the outside to make it less explicit. And it turns out the owner was a really nice guy and willing to work with us."

Sam believes the greatest danger facing youth in our community is isolation – from their peers, their teachers, their families, and especially their own emotions and aspirations. “If a young person has no one to confide in they cannot excel,” Sam says.

Sam tries to help youth move beyond feelings of loneliness and isolation by sharing his passion for documentary film, encouraging other students to explore their emotions and opinions through video images. Sam had never held a video camera before he came to Mi Casa, so before he was allowed to indulge his curiosity he was sent home with the instruction booklet. The next day he returned with the instructions memorized and his excitement in full bloom. The video camera soon became a natural extension of Sam’s hand and his tool for expressing himself and teaching other youth to do the same.

“Film carries stories that could never be told by mere speech, and digital stories open up windows to places most people have never visited,” Sam says. “I love to watch the people’s reactions when they see one of my short films. It makes the long process rewarding and it’s so powerful to see people inspired to make positive change.”

Sam is one of more than 1,500 deserving students in financial need who have received Daniels Fund Scholarships since the program’s inception in 2000.

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About Mi Casa Resource Center

The mission of Mi Casa Resource Center is to advance the economic success of Latino families. Mi Casa was founded in 1976 by eight Head Start mothers in Denver. These women understood that education and employment were vital for women to become successful on both a personal and economic level. As a result, Mi Casa was established to create these opportunities for adults and youth to become successful. For more than 30 years, Mi Casa has been committed to pursuing its mission through business, career and youth and family development strategies. www.MiCasaResourceCenter.org