



The Desert Sun  
May, 2007

## High school scholars continue Dr. Carreon's proud tradition

The late Reynaldo J. Carreon, M.D., a local leader in medicine and civic and community life in the Coachella Valley , would have been proud Sunday night.

The foundation, created in his name from cash and property he left behind so young people of Mexican descent would have the opportunity to earn a college degree, awarded 20 outstanding students with scholarships.

The students awarded scholarships were Ruby Aceves, Alma Felipe, Eric Gopar, Maria Luisa Mendez, Cristian Palacios, Vanessa Garcia, Ana Miguel, Andrea Ramirez, Stacy Valdez and Marlene Zaragoza, all of Desert Mirage High School ; Rebecca Fuentes and Nancy Ruiz from Desert Hot Springs High School ; and Jesse Rodriguez, Juan Villapando, Octavio Huerta and Vanessa Rojo of Indio High School won scholarships. Also honored were Orlando Rosas of Cathedral City High School and Alba Sanchez, Guillermo Alvarez and Lourdes Flores of Coachella Valley High School.

The late Reynaldo J. Carreon, M.D., a local leader in medicine and civic and community life in the Coachella Valley , would have been proud Sunday night.

The foundation, created in his name from cash and property he left behind so young people of Mexican descent would have the opportunity to earn a college degree, awarded 20 outstanding students with scholarships.

The students awarded scholarships were Ruby Aceves, Alma Felipe, Eric Gopar, Maria Luisa Mendez, Cristian Palacios, Vanessa Garcia, Ana Miguel, Andrea Ramirez, Stacy Valdez and Marlene Zaragoza, all of Desert Mirage High School ; Rebecca Fuentes and Nancy Ruiz from Desert Hot Springs High School ; and Jesse Rodriguez, Juan Villapando, Octavio Huerta and Vanessa Rojo of Indio High School won scholarships. Also honored were Orlando Rosas of Cathedral City High School and Alba Sanchez, Guillermo Alvarez and Lourdes Flores of Coachella Valley High School.

"When I graduated from high school way back in the '80s, the competition wasn't as intense as it is today," foundation president Pedro Rincón said. "There were no SAT prep classes (or) Advanced Placement courses and 4.0 was as high a GPA as one could get. The overachievers we are honoring tonight would have blown my entire class out of the water. The competition is fierce

today, but these students are more than holding their own, and they are well on their way to achieving their dreams.”

The Carreon scholars deserve much praise for their academic accomplishments. Many of them have grade-point averages that are well over 4.0, which is straight A's. Excelling in intense advanced placement classes typically take them beyond a 4.0 GPA.

“My parents were smart enough, but they didn't have the kind of opportunity that I have to get a college education,” said Fuentes, who plans to attend the University of California , Los Angeles in the fall. She plans to study medicine.

Knowing this, executive director Martin Martinez and board members of the Reynaldo J. Carreon M.D. Foundation set out each year to provide this opportunity. The foundation has been awarding scholarships to deserving students for 15 years. Nearly \$1 million has been awarded to more than 346 students from the Coachella Valley .

Dr. Carreon, born in San Antonio , had to leave school after the sixth grade to work and help his family, but he never let go of his dreams. He eventually went to work in Los Angeles . While working for a jeweler, he said he wanted to be an ophthalmologist. He was immediately informed that such a career was impossible for “a Mexican.” He was told he had gone as far as he would. Those words likely influenced him to fight harder to achieve his dreams.

Dr. Carreon's life was a prime example of the value of education, which made it possible for him to achieve leadership roles in the field of medicine and in his community. His outstanding lifetime achievements included becoming a physician and surgeon specializing in ophthalmology. He also donated the land where the JFK Hospital is located in Indio .

OAS\_AD('300x250\_1'); Before his death in 1991 at 91, Dr. Carreon established the Reynaldo J. Carreon M.D. Foundation. In addition to money, he left vacant property that at the time wasn't worth much. Years later, the area underwent a development boom and the foundation was able to sell the property for a profit that has increased the number scholarships awarded, which tend to be about \$2,000.

The mission of the foundation is to support initiatives that lead to increased and enhanced educational opportunities for young people. In addition to academic excellence, the students are chosen based on leadership, community involvement and pride in their cultural heritage.

Many past Carreon scholars have returned to the Coachella Valley to serve their community. Martha Mendez, who has a bachelor's degree in economics, manages funding for the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, a nonprofit corporation that helps low-income families obtain housing. Mendez also is a member of the Carreon Foundation board of directors. Gloria Margarita, a journalist, who earned a master's degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism in New York , currently reports for the local NBC affiliate KMIR6.

The majority of the scholarship recipients are the first in their families to go to college.

While scholarships have been awarded for 15 years, the Student Recognition Banquet is only in its 11th year. Held at the Indian Wells Country Club, the foundation invites families to dinner to watch their children receive the scholarships. This year's event was heartwarming. Parents beamed with pride for their outstanding children.

"I'm always amazed at the quality of students we have," Rincón said. "I think they demonstrate the quality of the people we have in the Coachella Valley ."

We too are proud of these outstanding students. We congratulate the 2007 Carreon scholars and wish them well in their future endeavors.