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Student Spotlight 2021

The Guerrero Family Havana, Florida



"If I were to tell my younger self how much of an impact the scholarship had on changing my life for the better, I would be in shock," says Krystal Guerrero, an 11th grade student at Robert F. Munroe School in Havana, Fla., and a third-year Florida Tax Credit scholarship recipient from the AAA Scholarship Foundation (AAA).

Many of our readers may be familiar with Krystal and her family from a spotlight story in 2019, not long after receiving their AAA scholarships. Krystal is the eldest daughter of Juan and Jelen Guerrero and the big sister to Paola, Genesis and Juan Jr. Juan and Jelen are hard-working parents determined to provide their children with opportunities they

did not have growing up, including a solid educational foundation. Juan began working at the young age of 14 to help his parents financially, and neither he nor Jelen was able to finish high school. When they had children of their own, they wanted to make sure that their own children would have the chance to build promising futures no matter what sacrifices they had to make.

From a young age, Krystal had a strong desire to succeed. However, coming from a primarily Spanish-speaking household, Krystal faced challenges in elementary school as she tried to grasp the subject matter coupled with the language barrier she faced in her daily interactions with teachers and peers. Even when the Guerreros transferred Krystal to a different public school, she continued to face obstacles and was not receiving the help she needed. And although she was struggling herself, she felt responsible for making sure her younger siblings were getting the help they needed. Unable to keep her head above water, she fell further behind in school.

Worried about their daughter's wellbeing and future, as well as that of her siblings, Juan and Jelen searched for a school that would be better suited to their children's learning needs. They found everything they were looking for in Robert F. Munroe Day School – dedicated teachers who share their love of learning with each student, a family-like atmosphere, and an array of classes, after-school clubs and extracurricular activities to help prepare students for higher learning and inspire them to become productive, engaged members of the community. Additionally, through the school, the Guerreros discovered that their children would qualify for a Florida Tax Credit Scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation. With an approval letter from AAA in hand, and the financial barriers lifted, the Guerreros began their journey at Munroe Day School during the 2018-19 school year, setting them on a path that would lead to remarkable changes for their whole family.



From the time Krystal entered Munroe Day School, she received the help she needed as the teachers not only encouraged her to fulfill her potential but also provided her with the tools and confidence to set goals for herself. Now in the 11th grade, she is dual-enrolled at Tallahassee Community College and working towards earning her associate degree. She loves the challenge of taking college-level courses while in high school, especially her literature class, where she gets to practice her love of reading and writing. As she thinks about her future after high school, she has a strong

calling to pursue a career in the medical field and plans to obtain a degree in nursing. She hopes to attend the University of Florida or even a college out of state.

"I want to help others," Krystal says as to her reason for choosing this career field. "I feel in my heart the need to be there for people."

Aside from her dedication to her academic work, Krystal has become involved in the extracurricular activities and clubs offered at Munroe Day School over the years – such as volleyball and Anchor Club, a youth service organization that helps students give back to their communities through volunteer work.



Krystal's younger siblings have also grown by leaps and bounds at their parent-selected school. Paola, who is now in the 8th grade, is doing well in her classes and even won the Heart of a Bobcat award from school. She has also joined the junior Anchor Club this year and hopes to run for club president, something she accredits to the school and the AAA Scholarship.

"We wouldn't have been able to come to this amazing school if it weren't for the donors and the scholarship," says Paola. "I am willing to run for president of a club. Never would I have gotten the confidence to do that at my old school."

Genesis, the youngest sister in the Guerrero family, is now in fourth grade and consistently brings home A's and B's and has found a love of learning and plenty of friendships at school. Juan Jr., the youngest of the Guerrero siblings, was able to begin his educational journey on the right track at Munroe Day School and is now enjoying each day of his first-grade class. He comes home excited about his day with plenty of stories to tell.

The family's experience has also led to new opportunities for Juan and Jelen. For years, Juan worked long hours in the scorching heat as a construction worker to provide for his family, while Jelen was a stay-at-home mother tending to the needs of their four children. Recently, job opportunities became available at Robert F. Munroe Day School for both Juan and Jelen, allowing them to be involved in their children's everyday lives while continuing to support the financial needs of their family. Juan now does maintenance for the school while Jelen works as a custodian. They also drive the school van to assist students with transportation to and from the school.



"My Dad has always been a hard worker," says Krystal. However, she says that his old job in construction required him to have long hours away from their family. Now she enjoys seeing him in the hallways at school, and most of all, seeing how the change in careers has had such a positive impact on her family. "It's amazing and the best part for me is that he is more present in my life than he used to be. He smiles more, he jokes around more – he's finally happy."

Krystal credits the scholarship program and her school for the tremendous impact it has not only had on her and her siblings' education, but their family life.

"Thanks to the AAA Scholarship, I can actually picture my future – and my siblings' future – and I know life will be good," says Krystal. "AAA and its donors have opened doors for us – doors we never knew existed. We are beyond grateful!"

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

AAA Scholarship Foundation promotes the advancement of education by administering educational choice programs. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 80 percent of these children are initially awarded AAA scholarships while living in households with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Many are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they first receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and are concerned about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their children and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and potential lifelong negative impacts. They wish to change their children's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada by companies that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only 501(c)(3) nonprofit scholarship organizations approved to administer these legislatively-authorized tax credit scholarship programs in multiple states. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your company can participate in the program, visit www.AAAScholarships.org, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888-707-2465 ext. 730.