



Arizona • Florida • Georgia • Nevada

Student Spotlight 2022

Dereck Sandoval

Reno, NV



“When times were hard, and it felt like every door was closed, the AAA Scholarship Foundation was there to remind me to remain hopeful, and to keep working hard as a single mother.” Those were the words spoken by AAA scholarship parent Karla Martinez four years ago – sentiments that remain true today.

Many of our readers may be familiar with Karla and her son, Dereck Sandoval, from a spotlight story in 2018. Now in the 8th grade, Dereck has continued to receive an education that meets his needs with help from an AAA Scholarship. Although Dereck has faced challenges over the years, having a mother who believes in him and a school family that provides support and opportunities to grow, has made all the difference.

Dereck turned 14 years old this year, but in hearing him speak, he exudes a quiet confidence and kindness that exceeds his age. Perhaps it is a strength he has inherited from Karla, a woman who has handled every challenge thrown her way with grace, strength and determination.

Their story began years before Dereck was born – nearly 20 years ago – when Karla made a bold decision to move from her home in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, all the way to Reno, Nevada. Although she would be leaving everything behind, she was determined to explore and search out new opportunities. She soon began a career in the healthcare industry as a medical biller and coder. As she continued to build her new life in the United States, she was able to fulfill another lifelong dream of becoming a mother when Dereck, her only child, was born. However, when Dereck was only 5 years old, his father left abruptly, leaving Karla to fulfill the roles of both mother and father alone. Despite the tough road they faced, Karla remained determined to provide everything she possibly could for her son, even if it meant working long hours and making sacrifices along the way.

One thing she would not sacrifice was her child’s education. Before his father left, Dereck had already begun school at Little Flower Catholic School, a private school in Reno that Karla felt was a better fit than the public school he was zoned to attend, which was plagued with low ratings from the state due to poor performance.

“I feel that education is one of the best things that you can provide to your children and having a safe environment plays an important role in their development,” says Karla. “I want to provide my child with the best education, but also, I want him to be in a safe and nurturing environment. The public school in our area was not able to provide that for him.”

With so much change occurring at home, Karla knew that she had to keep other areas of Dereck’s life as steady and secure as possible, including his educational environment. Little Flower served as an extension of their family, and she did not want to disrupt his education and well-being. Although finances were tough on a single income, Karla was able

to scrape by and pay the tuition at Little Flower using money she had saved up. However, eventually she found herself at a crossroads, knowing that she would not be able to continue to afford Dereck's tuition on top of their living expenses. However, just as she thought all hope was lost, she learned that they qualified for a tax credit scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation, easing the financial burden and allowing Dereck to continue his education at Little Flower.

With the years flying by with a seemingly blink of an eye, Dereck is coming to the end of his middle school years and will be graduating from Little Flower soon and continuing onto Bishop Manogue Catholic High School in the fall of 2022. Reminiscing about Dereck's school experience, Karla is grateful that her son was able to learn in a positive environment and receive an education that is preparing him for future success. The atmosphere at Little Flower inspired his love of learning – especially in the areas of social studies, literature and English – while also enabling him to be exposed to other activities and opportunities, such as theater and acting through the school's Missoula program. Aside from his school activities, Dereck is also involved in the Boy Scouts, in which he has received several recognitions and merit badges.



Dereck Sandoval in 2018 (4th grade)

“The AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors provided a lifeline when we needed it the most,” says Karla. “Without your help, my son would not have had these same opportunities and I am not sure what things would have looked like for him otherwise. Thank you for supporting us through this journey. We are so grateful!”

We look forward to following Dereck's journey as he continues to high school and beyond. Thank you to each and every one of our donors for making it possible for children like Dereck to access educational opportunities and gain hope for a promising future.

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.