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## Student Spotlight 2023

### Adam Dunand

Miami, FL



Kindhearted, down-to-earth, and grateful are all words Tessie Molina uses to describe her youngest son, Adam Dunand – a ninth grader at Christopher Columbus High School in Miami, a school he is attending with help from the AAA Scholarship Foundation (AAA).

“He’s a big teddy bear – everyone loves him,” says Tessie affectionately. “When he walks in, he lights up the room.”

Looking at pictures of Tessie and her three sons (Adam has two adult brothers), you can’t deny the bond they share. However, things have not been easy for this family. Several years ago, Tessie’s ex-husband (her sons’ father) left the family in financial turmoil – causing them to lose not only their house, but Tessie’s parents’ house as well. Left as the sole provider for her children, as well as the caretaker for her elderly mother, Tessie had to drain her 401k to provide housing for her family. Tessie, who has been teaching for 32 years, had to also take on a second job to keep her family afloat.

“My two oldest sons stepped in and would help take care of Adam while I worked my second job,” says Tessie. “It was a really tough time in our lives, but it made us stronger. And I think it brought my boys closer – they have a great relationship.”

At the time, Adam was an elementary student at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School in Miami, the same school that Tessie still serves as a first grade teacher. With so much turbulence going on in their lives, Tessie was determined to provide Adam with normalcy where she could – and keeping him in a school where he was thriving and surrounded by caring teachers was a top priority. Unfortunately, with her finances now limited, she was not sure how long she would be able to continue to afford the tuition. A scholarship from AAA provided the lifeline her family needed, enabling Adam to continue at St. Thomas and alleviating some of the financial stress.

“The AAA Scholarship Foundation provided me with a sense of security,” recalls Tessie. “I could finally breathe and say ‘my son is going to be okay’ and turn my focus on creating a better future for my children – and even for myself.”

The scholarship enabled Adam to remain at St. Thomas, where he graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2022, and continue onto Christopher Columbus High School (CCHS), an all-boys college preparatory school in Miami.

“CCHS is a great fit for Adam for many reasons,” explains Tessie. “The school has a great academic program that both challenges and accommodates his specific strengths, helping to prepare him for higher education and to serve as a leader in the community. But perhaps what makes this school such an important part of his life is that he is surrounded by positive male role models, something that is much needed, especially for those without father figures in their lives.”

Currently in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Adam maintains all A’s in his classwork while playing on the school’s lacrosse team. Instead of being jaded by the struggles their family went through, Tessie says that it has instead made Adam grounded and appreciative of the people in his life and the opportunities he receives. While we hope Tessie takes credit for raising a well-rounded young man despite the curveballs she was thrown, she acknowledges that having him in the right academic environment played a significant role.



“Everyone has a story and without the opportunity the scholarship gave us, our story would not have happened,” says Tessie. “During our struggles, the scholarship gave us hope. AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors are helping to plant good roots, where children can thrive and grow and create wonderful futures. We are so grateful to the companies who make these opportunities possible for so many!”

### **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](http://www.AAAScholarships.org), or contact Kerri Vaughan at [kerri@aaascholarships.org](mailto:kerri@aaascholarships.org) or 888-707-2465 ext. 730.*