

Scholarship intended for the resilient who face adversity

By William Ferchland
Tribune staff writer

Aleah Maes had to deal with alcoholism in her family.

Difficulties at home led Sarah Flores to find her own place at 16.

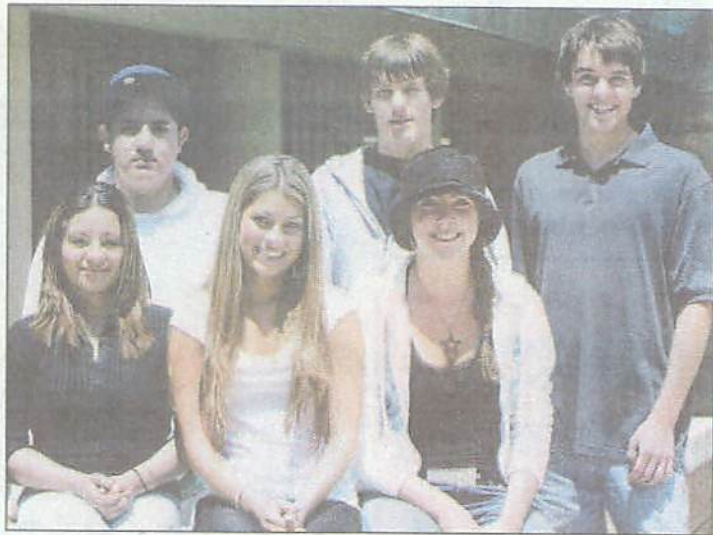
Liliana Juarez thought financial difficulties would prevent her from being the first in her family to attend college.

But the obstacles that no teenager should face were overcome by the three students who are among a pool of 10 Honoring Excellence and Rewarding Optimism scholarship winners who will be bestowed \$3,000 for college expenses.

"We're not the 4.0 student. We're not the perfect high school student but we still have goals and we accomplished those goals," Maes said.

Funded solely by community donations, the scholarship program began in 1998 by parent and real estate agent Doug Rosner.

"All we had in 1998 was

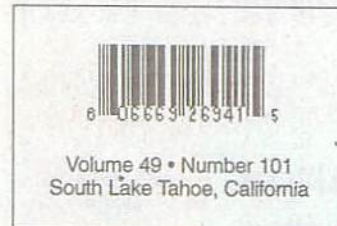


Dan Thrift / Tahoe Daily Tribune

HERO Scholarship winners from left are Liliana Juarez, Roberto Diaz, Sarah Flores, Brandon Johns, Aleah Maes and Charlie Odlin. Not pictured are Dessah Nevarez, Gemma Romo, Nicole Harter and Michael Monaghan.

recognition of high-achieving, college-bound kids and we were familiar with a number of kids who had never been recognized but had overcome very serious and significant

See **Scholarship**, Back page



Monday, May 22, 2006

Scholarship

From Page A1

obstacles," Rosner said.

The profiles of past recipients share common threads of heartache, hardships and burdens.

They included the loss of a parent or maybe even both, an abusive home life or overcoming language barriers to ace classes taught in English. Some battled mental diseases such as depression.

Gombu Sherpa experienced the death of his younger sister from an infection when she was five. His family lived in Nepal and the village they resided in didn't have the medical resources to save her.

He moved to the United States from Nepal while in elementary school and graduated South Tahoe High School in 2002 with the intent of becoming a doctor so he could return

to the Nepalese village.

Sherpa will be graduating next year from UC Santa Cruz with a chemistry degree. He is still interested in medicine, but is shifting his focus from being a doctor to the public health realm.

He said receiving the scholarship helped him financially and morally.

"It's good to know community exists like that," he said.

Since its inception, 104 scholarships have been given to South Tahoe High School students and those transferring from Lake Tahoe Community College. And the monetary amount has risen. In 1998, each scholarship for four students was worth \$750. This year each amount to about \$3,000 per student.

The scholarship board receives donations from more than 50 community members and organizations. Besides Rosner, board members include

Ron Yokotake, David Zicko and Ken Rollston.

Rosner prefers to keep the organization in the shadows, wanting the student recipients to garner the attention. Donations and other correspondence is sent to a post office box for the non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Candidates are selected by the high school counselors. Aaron Barnett, one the counselors, said among the toughest decisions involves cutting the pool of qualified students. In order to maximize scholarship amounts, recipients are kept in small numbers.

Qualifications involve good attendance, grades and a desire to continue their education.

"They have to be resilient by nature and overcome obstacles that others with the same potential have not had to," Barnett said.

When students are told they won a scholarship, "pure

shock" crosses their faces, Barnett said.

"They are so grateful," he said.

The money also helps students without Social Security numbers and takes care of early college expenses. Those without Social Security numbers face challenges in obtaining financial aid, Barnett said.

Along with high school duties, Flores works two jobs. She plans to attend American River College in Sacramento, transfer and study Spanish and child development. Maes is inquiring about culinary school.

Maes has her own definition of a hero.

"It's pretty much an independent individual who is their own person who can make the best out of their life," she said.

Anyone wishing to make donations can send them to P.O. Box 8698, South Lake Tahoe, Calif. 96158 or call (530) 314-9221.