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Local

Por La Gente scholarship winners grateful for awards

By Julio Urdaneta

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RACINE - Despite being born with a hearing deficiency, Jeremy Chavez, 19, has always had a dream: Being a lawyer.

Born and raised in Racine, Chavez developed an analytical mind and writing skills in school that were above the average for a kid his age.

"My teachers told me that those would be good qualities (in) a lawyer," Chavez said, "and that just kinda struck me."

His r sum , which includes his 4.0 grade point average and a mention on the 2003-2004 edition of "Who's Who Among American High School Students" among other merits, brought in several scholarships and grants to continue his education. He has been accepted at the College of Arts and Sciences at Marquette University, from where he plans to pursue a law career.

Chavez and Carmen de la Cruz, who is also from Racine, were selected as recipients of the Por La Gente Organization Hispanic Education Scholarship.

In an effort to promote educational opportunities to Hispanic youth in the Racine County, the Por La Gente Organization has established the Hispanic Athletic Scholarship and the Hispanic Academic/Community Scholarship to be awarded to area high school students. To qualify, applicants must be of Hispanic descent, be in their final year of high school and attend a post-secondary institution on a full-time basis beginning the next fall semester.

Both are \$1,000 scholarships.

Coming from a single-parent household, with five other siblings and a tight economic situation didn't stop de la Cruz from being an honor roll student four years in a row. She was involved in student government in Horlick High School, among other achievements. She has been accepted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She plans to become an accountant.

"I am very proud that I won this scholarship because coming from my family, a single-parent household, and it sticks (out) a lot," de la Cruz said.

Because of scholarships like this, de la Cruz said, "you can see what Hispanics can do, us kids how we are nowadays, there's more of us that are smart and talented and we are finally being recognized."

The Por La Gente Association of Racine began in 1984. The roots of the organization stem from the success achieved from the Por La Gente softball team over the past 25 years, competing in the city of Racine municipal leagues and tournaments throughout the State of Wisconsin.

The association recognizes the rewards associated with the participation in sports and recreation.

More information on their programs and on their annual softball tournament can be obtained at their Web site at: www.porlagente.org

Chavez and de la Cruz will start college next fall. Both feel very proud to have received a scholarship that honors their heritage.

Said Chavez: "To be honored by the people with whom I share the same roots, it's a wonderful thing on itself."

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