

BERKELEY COMMUNITY FUND

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization Advancing the Futures of Berkeley Youth

Summer Newsletter, 2014

BCF Welcomes Its Largest Incoming Class of Scholars

\$1.76M+ Granted to 115 BHS students since 2008

Over 150 friends, relatives, mentors and supporters joined BCF in welcoming 23 Berkeley high school graduating seniors into the High Hopes Scholarship Program at the Berkeley City Club on June 9. Saxophonist and scholarship recipient Monte Metal and his quartet provided a lively prelude to the inspiring ceremony. After the awards were presented, all eyes were on former BCF board member Russ Ellis, PhD, as he gave an engaging keynote speech that shared wisdom from his own journey from a farm in Fontana, CA to his role as a professor of social issues in architecture and urban design and later as UC's Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Affairs. He advised the students to be proactive in their education, not to be afraid or too proud to ask for help, and to continue that practice throughout their lifetimes because they will never stop learning.

We are thrilled that our community has stepped up to support 23 new scholars this year, our largest class since the High Hopes program began in 2008. All are the first generation of their families to attend college and immensely grateful to have the opportunity to pursue a higher education.



Raekwon Dallett and
Jaime Riley



Irene Headen and
Nuha Al Ammari



Dana Whitaker, Sophia
Liu and Penny Finnie



Bob Smith, Jake Hao Ma
and Janet Huseby

Congratulations to Our 2014 Scholars:

Katherine Acosta-Hernandez, UC Riverside
Nuha Al Ammari, San Francisco State
Alejandra Alas, UC Santa Barbara
Alfonso Alonso, San Diego State
Raekwon Dallett, UC Los Angeles
Yakira Evans, UC Merced
Kayla Garrett, Cal Poly - Pomona
Refugio Gonzalez, Barnard College
Nora Jang, UC Davis
Merewan Jemal, San Francisco State
Priyanka Jindal, San Francisco State
Tehan Ketema, University of Wisconsin
Junming Li, San Jose State
Sophia Liu, Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo
Jake Hao Ma, Humboldt State
Julia Maciel, San Jose State
Amanda Medina, UC Davis
Monte Metal, Columbia University
Lyheng Phey, Cal Poly - Pomona
Evangeline Sanchez, Cal State East Bay
Michelle Shannon, Sacramento State
Derek Spears, San Francisco State
Suyi Zhu, UC Davis

And to the High Hopes Scholars who graduated this year:

Morris Callegari, Diepriye Olali,
Dominique Fluker, Mika Kubo, Jody
Lyman, Brissa Mendoza, Christina
Nguyen, Charanpreet Sahota, and
Amanda Tornero

High Hopes Program Bridges Gaps, Connects Community

Berkeley Community Fund (BCF) High Hopes scholarships—\$16,000 paid over four years—help close the gap between other grants our scholars receive and the cost of college tuition, room, board, fees and expenses. They are significant and liberating; in a recent survey, many of our scholars reported that with our help they need to hold only one job and can work fewer hours during the school year. Our funds enable them to focus more on their studies and get involved in extracurricular activities that help define the college experience.

Just as important, our High Hopes program also helps close the graduation gap between students from families in the top and bottom income quartiles, especially those who are the first generation of their families to attend college. We provide services to help them succeed: a volunteer mentor, financial literacy training, transition-to-college

workshops, and regular check-ins with BCF staff. This support helps them better navigate the demands and challenges of college and increases the likelihood they will successfully obtain a degree. So far, we are proud to say the results are promising — 85% of our scholars have earned a bachelor's degree or are still on course to graduate.

Some of these kids have so much grit and backbone that they would succeed no matter what, but numerous studies show that for most of the population we serve, financial assistance combined with support services have the most positive impact on college persistence. Our scholars confirm our



I mentor because I enjoy watching students discover their strengths and passions. I enjoy fostering their independence. Volunteering with BCF is a small way I can help address inequalities.
— Carol Lashof, pictured with her mentee, Ilse Rueda

formula works. They draw strength from our community and are motivated by our belief in their potential and our encouragement to overcome self-doubts. As further testament, some of our alumnae are now mentoring some of our newest scholarship recipients.

We try to match our scholars with mentors who share their fields of interest. Some scholars even get two (a few couples volunteer as a team). Mentors are asked to

(cont'd on p. 3—)

Who We Are

The Berkeley Community Fund (BCF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation established in 1991 by a group whose love for Berkeley and a community of hope and equity inspired them to set up a fund to reflect their goals. Since 2007, we have focused on providing scholarships and mentoring support to promising Berkeley High School students attending 4-year colleges and universities. We envision a future in which all Berkeley youth succeed in developing to their full potential and in sharing positive, enriched lives with our community and the world.

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Great Things are Happening at the Berkeley Community Fund

—Joleen Ruffin, Executive Director

Time flies when you're having fun! May 20 marked my one-year anniversary as executive director of the BCF. I am so happy to be part of this community organization. It has been great working with a very engaged and dedicated board of directors as well as with two delightful graduate students from the UC Berkeley Board Fellows program, Christina Sedney (Goldman School of Public Policy) and Oseyi Ikuenobe (Haas).

I've spent the past year getting to know our High Hopes Scholars, their interests, accomplishments, and needs. At the same time, our board fellows dug a little deeper into our program and we will use the results of their work to fine-tune how we support our scholars. We just hired a part-time College Success Coordinator (CSC), Lynn Walker-Roatis, to work with our scholars and mentors. Her role will complement that of our mentors, to ensure success for all the students in our program. You'll learn more about Lynn in our next newsletter.

I've also spent much of the past year getting new systems in place to provide BCF with a solid structure for scalable growth. We've moved the scholarship application process from a home-grown system to a cloud-based service used by hundreds of scholarship providers across the U.S. The efficiencies will help keep our administrative expenses low, enabling us to continue putting all non-board donations toward scholarships and programs.

May was a month with both highs and lows. It's the month when our team of community volunteers and board members get to meet and interview some of the amazing Berkeley high school seniors applying to our program. Their talents, community involvement, aspirations, and stories of overcoming challenges are inspiring. Unfortunately only a fraction of them are selected as High Hopes Scholars. While we celebrate the 23 new scholarship recipients (up from 20 in 2013), we also must say no to many deserving students. With a record number of applications received this year—60% more than in 2013—the process was more competitive, but the need is greater than ever.

I enjoyed welcoming the 2014 class of High Hopes Scholars into our BCF family at the awards ceremony on June 9. Many thanks to the parents, teachers, counselors, mentors and donors who will continue to support them as they begin their college journey.

SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 9, 2014

Please join us for the
Berkeley Community Fund's
2014 High Hopes Dinner

presenting the
Benjamin Ide Wheeler Medal
to
Dr. Arlene Blum

for her visionary leadership in
research and policy work to
protect human health and the
global environment.

Cocktail Reception: 5:30-7:00 PM
Program & Dinner: 7:00-9:00 PM

Tickets and sponsorship
details available at
www.berkfund.org or
(510) 542-2126



Benjamin Ide Wheeler laureates Narsai David (2011), Wavy Gravy (2013) and Susan Medak (2012) celebrating at the 2013 awards ceremony.

Arlene Blum to Receive 2014 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award



We are delighted to announce that environmental scientist, author, and mountaineer Dr. Arlene Blum is this year's winner of the Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award. The award recognizes her many and varied accomplishments: leading the first American climb to the summit of Annapurna I, her efforts to eliminate harmful chemicals from our homes and environment, starting with removing cancer-causing flame retardants from children's sleepwear in 1977, and her more recent work as founder and executive director of the

Green Science Policy Institute. Dr. Blum will accept the award at BCF's High Hopes Annual Dinner on October 9, 2014.

Dr. Blum first came to worldwide prominence in the 1970s, when she co-led the first all-woman team to climb Denali. In 1978 she organized and led the first successful American (and all-woman) ascent of Annapurna I, considered one of the world's most dangerous and difficult mountains. She later completed the Great Himalayan Traverse across the mountain regions of Bhutan, Nepal and India and hiked the length of the European Alps with her baby daughter on her back. Her amazing adventures are described in her own books, *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* and *Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life*.

Dr. Blum, who received a PhD in biophysical chemistry at UC Berkeley, applies the same strength and commitment to her role as an environmental scientist, leading the challenging work to stop the use of harmful chemicals in consumer products in the United States and worldwide. Indeed, her work with the Green Science Policy Institute has led to policy changes that have prevented the use of hundreds of millions of pounds of harmful chemicals in clothing, furniture, electronics and other products. Most recently, her work contributed to California's new furniture flammability standard, TB 117-2013, for fire safe furniture without the use of unnecessary flame-retardants. It is a victory for more responsible use of chemicals and a healthier planet for current and future generations.

Dr. Blum's accomplishments are recognized around the world. She's the recipient of a Gold Medal from the Society of Women Geographers, an honor previously given to Amelia Earhart, Margaret Mead and Mary

Leakey. The UK's *Guardian* named her as one of the "world's 100 most inspiring women" and she's been selected by the National Women's History Project as one of 100 "Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet." In addition to her professional pursuits, Dr. Blum founded Berkeley's popular Himalayan Fair, an annual celebration of Himalayan culture designed to increase friendship and understanding between Berkeley and the Himalayan peoples.

About the Benjamin Ide Wheeler Medal

The Benjamin Ide Wheeler Medal was established in 1929 by the Service Club of Berkeley to honor the city's "most useful citizen." It is named after the University of California president who was best known for transforming the school from a small land grant college into a world-renowned university. Dr. Wheeler recognized that the fundamental basis for democracy is drawn from healthy local communities. Today, the award honors individuals whose broad vision, community engagement, and actions improve the quality of life for a significant number of people in Berkeley.

Dr. Blum joins a list of Wheeler Award recipients who have had a remarkable impact on our lives. The first medalist was William



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H. Waste, a California Supreme Court justice who was a co-founder and the first president of the Berkeley Public Library and co-founder and president of the Berkeley YMCA. Later recipients include Nobel Prize-winning physicist Ernest O. Lawrence, namesake of Lawrence Berkeley Labs, Lawrence Livermore Labs, and Lawrence Hall of Science;

environmentalist David Brower; the Honorable Thelton E. Henderson; Save the Bay co-founder Sylvia McLaughlin; Davida Coady, MD, founder of Options Recovery Services; acoustic pioneers and local philanthropists Helen and John Meyer; Berkeley Rep managing director Susan Medak; radio personality, chef, raconteur and philanthropist Narsai David; and cultural icon and humanitarian Wavy Gravy.

About the High Hopes Annual Dinner

The annual dinner brings together people from the greater East Bay community to celebrate what we love best about Berkeley, a small city with big ideas, a big heart, and big impact. The festive event is the major fundraiser for the Berkeley Community Fund's High Hopes Scholarship program. Sponsorship and ticket information is available at www.berkfund.org or by calling (510) 542-2126.

—Bridging Gaps, Connecting Community (cont'd from p. 1)

make a four-year commitment and, at a minimum, check-in regularly with their mentees to see how college life is progressing and to provide encouragement and guidance. Some scholars are independent problem-solvers; others ask for advice on issues ranging from roommate situations to what extracurricular activities to pursue. It's a mutually beneficial relationship. The scholars get mentor "consultants" and mentors enjoy the rewards of helping a young person succeed.

We tried something new for our college transition workshops this year. In addition to BCF's summer workshop in July, we sent our scholars to "On Our Way," a daylong workshop on the UC Berkeley campus organized by the Bay Area College Success Network, Beyond 12, and the West Contra Costa Public Education Fund. They learned how to navigate registration, course selection and academic

planning, met cohorts who will attend their college as freshmen this fall, and learned about the college experience from upper classmen.

For the past three years, the Berkeley office of Charles Schwab & Co. has been our partner in providing the financial literacy component of our summer workshop. The training, which covers money management and skills that lead to financial independence, is very well received by the students. They leave empowered to make sound financial decisions regarding credit, savings, and guidelines for discretionary spending.

We'll keep you posted as our program continues to develop. In the meantime, learn more about mentoring at www.berkfund.org/mentoring, follow us on Facebook and give us a call if you're interested. We accept applications year-round.



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BEN JOHNSON

**Falik-Cohen High Hopes Scholar, 2012
@ Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo**

Major: Architecture

Q. How long have you wanted to be an architect?

A. I realized I wanted to be an architect in the eighth grade, when I realized what an architect does. At the time, David

Trachtenberg of Trachtenberg Architects showed me around his Berkeley firm. After that...there seemed to be no other possible option for what I should do with my life. It was beautiful.

Q. Did Berkeley High prepare you well?

A. Being in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Berkeley High and graduating with the IB diploma definitely prepared me well. Being exposed to countless cultures and ways of teaching and learning throughout dozens of countries definitely influenced the way I think as a person and as a designer.

Q. What are the three most challenging things about college?

A. The most challenging thing is hearing or seeing, on a daily basis, the healthy relationships students have with their parents, families and careers. Standing in line at the bookstore and hearing about so-and-so's family friend or relative who hooked them up with an internship... Seeing parents stop by for a weekend surprise and giving their kid a box of fun school supplies...It is a constant reminder that these things aren't possible in my life and I hope they are aware of how lucky they are to have these opportunities that seem normal to them.

Another challenge is being one of the only black people in my

college. Most of the time it doesn't faze me because I don't realize it because I'm absorbed in architecture. But at times, when I look up and around and see zero black people anywhere, it makes me feel uneasy. Coming from Berkeley, San Luis Obispo was and still is a culture shock.

A last challenge is time management. For most of my quarters, I've struggled with making sure I finish everything on time.

Q. How have you spent your summers?

A. The summer after senior year of high school was one of the best of my life. I was a video and web design intern at Desmos, a mathematical software start-up company in downtown San Francisco. I mostly worked on redesigning the company's web page, creating new layout schemes that the CEO would write the code for...Last summer I was an architectural and interior design intern in Newport Beach, for Newman Garrison + Partners. I had such a fun time...exploring how an architecture firm works in the real world and exploring cities and life in Southern California. This summer I'll be interning at Gelfand Partners Architects in San Francisco.

Q. Has your mentor made a difference?

A. My mentor has definitely made a difference. Curtis and I have talked and he's given me great advice on how to approach my academic career as an architecture major. He is a Bay Area architect and this helps me relate him more to my life.

Q. What is the most important life lesson you've learned at college to date?

A. If you have an idea that you think will work, stick with it no matter what people think. It's okay to break rules, sometimes.

*Scholar
Spotlight*