

## Century Scholars

### 2017 - Cassandra Hurst



Cassandra Hurst is a second year student at Kankakee Community College. She is pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice and hopes to complete a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology. In addition to her studies, Cassandra is a decorated equestrian, having won a national championship in 2015.

Cassandra works two jobs to pay for college and support her horses. She has worked hard for everything that she has, because she believes that, as a woman, you should be able to support yourself independently. Cassandra hopes to one day attend the Police Academy and have a career as a Conservation Police Officer.

Receiving the Century Scholars Scholarship has allowed Cassandra to work toward completing her Associate's Degree before transferring to a four-year university.

### 2017 - Katelyn O'Dell



Katelyn O'Dell is a second year student at Kankakee Community College. She is currently pursuing her Nursing Degree. Katelyn is passionate about a career in the healthcare field and will do whatever it takes to be successful.

Katelyn is a CNA, Phlebotomist, and works in the ER at Riverside. Her career choice came after an illness caused her to spend time in the hospital when she was younger. Katelyn is grateful for the care and compassion that she received from her

nurses and hopes to make the same difference in other people's lives. She counts her greatest achievement as being accepted into the Nursing Program at KCC.

Receiving the Century Scholars Scholarship has allowed Katelyn to focus more on school, although she continues to work three jobs in the healthcare field.

## 2017 - Taylor Bradley



Taylor Bradley is a second year student in the Paralegal Program at Kankakee Community College. She worked very hard to become a successful paralegal student with a promising legal career ahead of her. Taylor began her start at KCC in the GED program and began attending college classes shortly after becoming a young mother.

Taylor began the Paralegal Program at KCC because she wanted to challenge herself. She credits program coordinator Dr. Kristine Condon with motivating her to achieve the successes that she has. Taylor considers her greatest achievement to be her ability to multitask. She works, studies, and raises her son often simultaneously.

Receiving the Century Scholars Scholarship award has meant so much to Taylor because she has worked hard for everything she has and it finally feels like her hard work was recognized and has paid off.

## 2016 - Yamei Rohlfs



Yamei moved to the United States from China three years ago when she married her husband, who is from Kankakee.

She wanted to continue on her education, and signed up for the GED program in Watseka in 2014. She completed a GED in 2015.

Yamei is currently pursuing a Medical Coding certificate at KCC, with an expected completion of May, 2017. She plans to continue at KCC, to work toward an associate degree. Yamei also volunteers for the Adult Education Department, helping students with math who are studying for a high school equivalency.

## 2016 - Nicole Schuldt



Nicole Schuldt decided quite some time ago that she wanted to pursue a career in a field relating to helping other people. As an infant adoptee from Russia, Nicole has grown to appreciate life as some children in foreign countries may not have had the same opportunities as she has enjoyed.

Nicole graduated from High School in 2016 after completing her senior year as a dual-credit student at Kankakee Community College. She was very active in sports including playing Volleyball, Captain of the Cheerleading Squad and excelling in Softball. She is currently attending KCC with an immediate goal of entering the Nursing program.

Nicole is a member of the KCC Student Advisory Council and Phi Theta Kappa. She also works part time while maintaining a full class schedule. After receiving her RN, she plans to

enter an accelerated program through a four year university to complete the BSN. Nicole's future plans call for working in critical care and entering the Nurse Anesthetist program.

## 2016 - Chris Canady



Christopher Canady is a KCC Sophomore and is currently enrolled in the Psychology program. He values trusting ones own intuition and curiosity, honest and open communication, and creating positive ideas and relationships.

Chris is a co-chair of Honors in Action in Phi Theta Kappa, the international academic honors society for college students. He plans to attend the International Scholar Laureate delegation of Medicine and Science, where he will study ancient and modern healing techniques. He enjoys learning how and why humans think, feel, and act the ways that we do, and hopes to use alternative methods of meditation and lifestyle choices to help people find a balance in their lives.

"This scholarship helps tremendously with the financial stress that comes with attending college," Chris said. "The confidence in me shown by being chosen as a recipient has given great encouragement to follow my dreams. Thank you."

## 2015 - Vickie Varela



Vickie Varela was originally inspired to pursue a career in nursing when she saw a video about a Licensed Practical Nursing program that her high school offered. After convincing her mother to pay the \$500 for the LPN program, she enrolled and gained clinical experience. Vickie successfully completed the LPN program while attending high school.

Now more than 20 years later, Vickie is pursuing her goal of becoming a registered nurse. She made a commitment to care for her three children, while working full time and attending school.

Vickie is currently in her third semester of the nursing program. She feels that her education has been a “wonderful journey” and has created many relationships along the way. Vickie plans on continuing her education after KCC. She hopes to become a nurse practitioner and a nurse educator.

No matter what path Vickie chooses, she knows “that the possibilities in nursing are endless.”

## 2015 - Neftali Fonseca



Neftali Fonseca believes in perseverance and hard work.

Her parents, both immigrants from Mexico, left school at early ages to work and assist their families. Her parents moved to the United States, met and were married in Harvey, Illinois, where Neftali was born and raised. She and her siblings attended a

school which was plagued by problems with drugs and violence. The neighborhood they lived in was not safe.

Neftali's family made the decision to relocate to Grant Park, and Neftali attended Momence Junior High School. The change in her environment allowed her to transform from a "B and C student" to earning straight A's.

Neftali enjoyed the newfound challenge of her Advanced Placement and Honors courses. She also participated in seven extracurricular activities at Momence High School. If that wasn't enough, she completed 40 hours of community service during her high school career. Upon graduation she had a 4.16 GPA and was in the top 10 percent of her class.

As a first-year student pursuing a degree in engineering, she remains busy. She works part-time and helps her father with his construction business in her spare time. Neftali is the first person in her family to complete high school and is a first generation college student. She credits her parents for her persistent work ethic.

## 2015 - Jacob VanPelt



In high school, Jacob had no idea what career he wanted to pursue.

Then his father injured his shoulder and needed physical therapy. Jacob noticed that the physical therapy treatments really helped his father's injury to heal. After his father completed his therapy, Jacob asked to shadow the physical therapy assistant. He immediately knew that this was the path he was interested in pursuing.

Once Jacob made the decision to study physical therapy, he began looking for options for his education. His grandmother, a Manteno resident, encouraged Jacob to look into the

program offered at KCC. After researching and learning about the success the program, he decided to move from Marquette, Mich., eight hours away, to live with his grandparents while attending KCC.

"I am so appreciative of this scholarship," Jacob said. "This money will not go to waste. It will be used to help get me through my program so that one day I can help people the way that my father was helped. Maybe one day I can inspire a young student to take the same journey as I did."

## 2014 - Sara Fortin



Sarah is a business major and a first generation college student. She is very involved in student life at KCC. She participates in the Student Advisory Board, Phi Theta Kappa, and the Student Ambassador Program. She has outstanding student leadership and advocacy skills. Sarah's father is the sole provider for the family. She is helping to pay for her education by working part time at The Wedding Center.

Sarah has worked hard to overcome her shyness. Her confidence is evident; during her interview she suggested that she would like to be an advocate for scholarships at KCC. Sarah plans to pursue a career in marketing and is considering ISU or University of Illinois in Chicago for her transfer institution.

## 2014 - Natasha Richmond



Natasha began her college career at Washington University in hopes of becoming a physician. As she progressed in her coursework she became overwhelmed with the cost of her education. She did not complete her degree but instead, gained employment as a geologist where she worked for 9 years, completing soil samples and writing reports. She enjoyed her work but found that she was drawn to health services and the science of medicine.

Natasha was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in January of 2010. She explained that the nurses who cared for her gave her the strength to fight for her cancer. Natasha is an only child and her parents live in Colorado (they relocated there 5 years ago). When she longed to talk to someone about her fears, she leaned on the nurses who were a part of her medical team to give her strength rather than worrying her mom.

It is easy to feel Natasha's passion for nursing and science. Natasha is the nurse who knows how to put your mind at ease when you are scared or need to understand the science behind your treatment. During her interview she spoke about patient dignity, her desire to make an impact and her goal to plant roots in the Kankakee community. She is looking at several RN to BSN programs in her search of the best fit. Natasha plans on becoming a nurse practitioner.



## 2014 - Molly Ferrell



Molly is in her third semester of the nursing program. She is also an assistant cheerleading coach at Kankakee High School. Molly took 24 credit hours in the fall of 2013 because she received scholarships from the KCC Foundation that paid for that many classes. She is a hard worker and does what is necessary to attain her goals.

Molly's parent's divorced in 2010 and she pitched in, putting family ahead of her own goals. Molly dropped out of KCC at that time to work at two part time jobs and care for her two younger siblings. After saving up for classes and reapplying for the nursing program, Molly was able to focus on her education again. She is doing really well in the nursing program and was recommended by her division for this scholarship. She explained that much of her confidence is the result of what she has learned from helping her family. She has no regrets in assisting her family to get back on track following her parents' divorce, rather she enjoys helping others. Molly is sincere and passionate about nursing. She has a special quality. She is the nurse that you want with you when things are really bad. Molly said that receiving the Century Scholars Scholarship would allow her to focus on her studies because finances continue to be a challenge for her family.

Molly would like to be the face of Century Scholars and share her KCC experience with the community. She plans to attend Governors State University when she graduates from KCC so she can remain close to her family. She wants to live in Kankakee after getting her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing.

## 2013 - Melissa Guzman



Melissa Guzman learned the value of hard work and sacrifice from her parents, who work multiple jobs to make ends meet. At home, Melissa does her part by caring for her younger siblings and working two part-time jobs, in addition to attending school. She is driven by her dream of becoming a teacher. Melissa, a first-generation college student majoring in education, completed her freshman year at KCC with a 3.2 grade point average. She aspires to be a role model to other Hispanics and to show her family that all of their love and sacrifice has been worthwhile.

Melissa is bilingual and English is her second language. While growing up, she admired her teachers and began her quest to become a teacher. She currently volunteers in a bilingual kindergarten class at Taft Elementary School in Kankakee, where she enjoys instilling a love of learning in the students along with assisting the teachers.

After completing an associate degree at KCC, Melissa plans to transfer and complete a bachelor's degree in education with an English as a Second Language endorsement.

## 2013 - Jaeleigh Fritz



Jaeleigh Fritz was 10 years old when her sister was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. As the experience resonated with her, it fueled Jaeleigh's passion to help people. She has worked in healthcare since the age of 16, in areas including reception and dietary; and as a certified nurse's assistant (CNA) and restorative aide. She credits her leadership skills to these experiences, and feels that they will help her to become a better nurse.

A first-generation student, Jaeleigh currently maintains a 3.12 grade point average in the Registered Nursing Program at KCC and looks forward to completing her degree. She says that receiving the Century Scholars award will alleviate the financial burden of her education and allow more time for her studies. After graduating in Spring 2014, Jaeleigh plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing at Governors State University in University Park.

## 2012 - Heather Brush



Heather is in her final semester of the Paralegal program at KCC. She finished her 2012-13 school year with a 3.89 grade point average. Her long term goal is to become an attorney, and her aspiration is to practice constitutional law, or another area of law that would allow her to fight for people's rights.

She is a past recipient of the Lambda Epsilon Chi National Honors Society Scholarship, and a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two year colleges. She is a 28 year old wife and mother who calls college her "fresh start", and an opportunity to prove to her daughter that with hard work and perseverance anything is possible.

## 2012 - Jace Huggins



Jace finished his freshman year at KCC with a 3.78 grade point average. He has been active as a KCC Student Ambassador and member of the Student Advisory Council. Student Advisory Council members provide crucial insight into what KCC students want and need, and they communicate student concerns to the college administration, and provide institutional information to their peers. He has already learned the meaning of giving back as volunteer for many community initiatives, and calls helping people a privilege.

Jace plans to graduate from KCC with a general studies degree, then earn a bachelor's degree in sociology, and eventually, a master's degree in health or business administration.

## 2011 - Joshua Beneze



Joshua Beneze is a KCC sophomore enrolled in the Visual Arts program. He plans to transfer to Governors State University upon graduating from KCC. Joshua has a GPA of 3.5.

He is the incoming co-president of Phi Theta Kappa, the international academic honor society for community college students. Additionally, Joshua is training to be a state-certified tutor for the GED and Adult Literacy programs at KCC.

Joshua is the first in his family to attend college.

## 2011 - Nicole Brenneisen



Nicole is a 2009 graduate of Clifton Central High School and she is enrolled in the Radiography Program at KCC. She was an honors student throughout her high school career.

Nicole is on the KCC President's list, and is a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the international academic honor society for community college students. Outside the classroom, she has been actively involved in the community by participating in events including the Memory Walk for Alzheimer's Disease, the Jingle

Bell Run for Arthritis, and the March of Dimes Walk America.

Nicole is the first in her family to attend college.