



The Learning Curve

BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO THE LIVES YOU'VE CHANGED



Winter 2018

www.graceplacenaples.org

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AP LEADERSHIP ALUMNI UPDATE

We've been checking in with a few of our AP Leadership alumni and past Jubilee Scholarship Recipients. You may remember these smiling faces from the 2015 summer issue of The Learning Curve. If you thought they were impressive then, wait till you read what they've been up to lately. We are thrilled to update you on these impressive future makers.



Bryan Olivia-Infante



While enrolled in AP Leadership, Bryan Oliva-Infante maintained a 4.12 GPA, volunteered more than 150 hours, and was trumpet section leader in his high school marching band. Although he was a well-rounded student, Bryan faced many adversities in his childhood. Growing up in a one parent household, his mother was forced to work long hours with little pay to support her family. In 2015, Bryan and two other AP Leaders' lives changed when they were awarded free college tuition via Jubilee Scholarship.

Bryan is now in his senior year at Florida Gulf Coast University. He is majoring in Political Science and minoring in psychology and social justice. He serves as President of the

FGCU College Democrats and is heavily involved in Student Government. Additionally, Bryan is interning at NextGen America, an environmental advocacy nonprofit and political action committee, and worked diligently in this year's midterm elections.

Bryan does make time to advise his little brother Jonny, a current Grace Place AP Leader and junior at Golden Gate High School. "I am helping him and telling him that now is the time to think about college applications and what career path he wants to make" says Bryan.

Bryan graduates in spring 2019 and hopes to work in Tallahassee or Washington D.C. shortly after. Perhaps we will see Bryan on our election ballot one day!



Karla Moreno-Perez



Karla Moreno-Perez faced health issues throughout her life and was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease when she was a teenager in high school. Her overwhelming medical bills caused financial strains in her family, which already lived on meager means. Karla didn't let these unfortunate circumstances derail her from her goals. While at Grace Place, she maintained a 4.68 GPA in high school and served as President of the Junior Civitans and Vice President of her school's National Honor Society. Thanks to the Jubilee Scholarship, Karla

became the first in her family to attend college. She is currently double majoring in Forensic Studies and Forensic Science at FGCU. Aside from her intense calculus and pathology classes, she is also interning at a sheriff's office in the area. "With this internship, I have learned what I really want to do. I realized I want to be behind the scenes and do forensic lab work," said Karla.

When she is not busy in classrooms or labs, Karla dedicates some of her time to Student Government as Director of Alternative Breaks. Karla plans to get a Master's in Forensics after she graduates in spring 2020. Karla is also happy to report that she is in good health and her Crohn's is in remission.



Tony Guarino IV



Tony Guarino IV graduated from AP Leadership in 2015 and went off to Florida Gulf Coast University. Tony always wants to give back and dedicated his summers to Grace Place as a Lead Program Assistant and taught our swim program.

Tony has his hands full taking five courses during his senior year. He also advises the Global Business Brigades, a group he founded that builds economic opportunities in the developing world. A few months ago, Tony had the life changing opportunity to travel with fifteen FGCU Honors Students to the Peruvian Amazon to

help build a satellite internet system for a rural clinic.

Tony has certainly caught the travel bug. He will be packing his bags once again and going to Barcelona, Spain to study abroad in the spring. He'll be attending courses at the University of Barcelona and will experience the European lifestyle. "I cannot wait. I'm really excited and can't wait to let you all know how it is," says Tony.

After graduation, Tony plans to come back to the United States and get a Master in Business Administration degree from Harvard Business School. Tony would love to eventually consult potential real estate investors.



Alex Amador



Alex Amador knew he always wanted to go to college, especially after his parents sacrificed everything and fled from Cuba with the hope that he and his sister would have a better life. Alex credits AP Leadership for his leadership and communication skills and boost in confidence. In high school, Alex had a 4.63 GPA and was also captain of the Academic Team, Swim Team and co-captain of the Tennis Team. In 2015, Alex was awarded the Jubilee Scholarship. "Grace Place has had a lasting impact on me. Without Grace Place, I would not be at Florida Gulf Coast University on a full-ride scholarship," says Alex.

Alex started his senior year at FGCU, majoring in biology with a concentration in Organismal Ecology. His semester is really tough, filled with upper-level courses but he is doing well in all his classes. Alex is also doing research with Dr. Jay Horn on a unique plant species that can be found on the university campus.

Alex is a member of many programs at FGCU. He serves as a Honors Mentor for the Honors College, where he helps new honors students in their transition from high school to university. In addition, he is an executive Board member of the Student Alumni Association and brings in accomplished alumni to speak with students in different classes.

As far as post-college plans, Alex is looking into master and doctoral degree programs around the country.





CELEBRATION OF

Grace
TOASTING 15 YEARS

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, March 1, 2019
at Six O'Clock

The Ritz-Carlton, Naples
280 Vanderbilt Beach Road
Naples, Florida 34108

Join us for an unforgettable evening, as we come together to celebrate fifteen years of remarkable growth and accomplishment. The evening will begin in the courtyard of the Vanderbilt Ballroom at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples. Enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres as you experience the Faces of Grace, a collection of art photography from Brian Tietz featuring students from Grace Place's fifteen year history. Meet some of the subjects in person, along with other Grace Place students, before a delectable dinner, prepared by renowned Executive Chef, George Fistrovich, served in the newly-renovated ballroom. A live auction and entertainment by Naples' own Billy Dean and Dawn will delight as we commemorate fifteen years of changing lives through education.

Learn more at GracePlaceNaples.org

GulfshoreLife

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BRIGHT BEGINNINGS TO BUSINESS OWNERS: WILL ALL THE INDEPENDENT WOMEN PLEASE STAND UP



With their young children in tow, Blanca and Celia first walked into Grace Place not knowing English, struggling financially, and having the stresses of running a multi-family household. They had something else in common, they were determined not let their circumstances hinder them from their big dreams.

Blanca started Grace Place's Bright Beginnings program two years ago. "I first came here because I wanted my youngest daughter to learn English, but Grace Place does much more than that. I've learned so much and I feel like I am a better mom," said Blanca with tears in her eyes. "I know about a child's developmental growth and how important it is to read with them and take part in their education," she said.

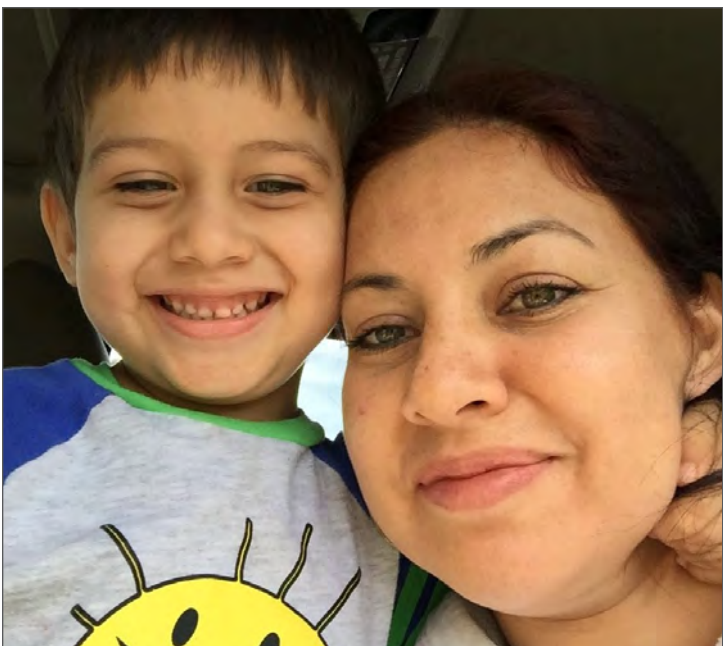
It is not only the Bright Beginnings program Blanca has benefited from. Blanca started a small cleaning business a few years ago, and she credits The 7

Habits of Highly Effective People training she took at Grace Place over the summer with her increased business and organizational skills. "I always practice Habit 2, Beginning with the End in Mind. My objective is that I do not want to have to work all the time... I want to be able to hire more people so that I have groups of people who are working for me," she said. With the assistance of Grace Place staff, Blanca was awarded a MicroGrant and she has big plans to expand her cleaning business. "One of the things that I will buy are t-shirts for my cleaning company. My plan is to hopefully have teams that I have trained that I am confident can do a good job," explained Blanca. The 7 Habits have helped her in her home life as well. "My fifteen-year-old daughter and I used to argue often. We had a lot of miscommunication. Now, we are better and understand each other because we express ourselves and apply the habits," she said.

Celia, a mother of four, signed up for Bright Beginnings with her one-year-old daughter Jazmin four years ago in hopes of breaking the cycle of poverty. "It was clear to me I needed to learn more English and improve my education, so I could help my children," said Celia. Both Celia and Jazmin excelled through Bright Beginnings. When Celia participated in The 7 Habits training this summer with Blanca, the ladies bonded over their mutual

business ambitions. Now with Jazmin successfully enrolled in kindergarten, Celia has the time and newly acquired skills to achieve her goal of starting her own cleaning business. Celia's strong determined nature is driven by a mother's love. "I started my business thinking about my children. When I heard about the MicroGrant application at Grace Place, I quickly applied. I was awarded the grant, and it was a huge help for me to start to buy some of the material that I needed to begin. My goals are growing my business and making sure that my children and I get ahead in life," explained Celia.

Blanca and Celia are well equipped for their in-season clients thanks to their enhanced management skills and the additional funding that was awarded to them over the summer. Nothing is holding back these rising entrepreneurs.





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A Swing of Grace

BENEFITING GRACE PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Eighth Annual Golf Outing

April 27, 2019

At the
**Wyndemere
Country Club**

More Information at GracePlaceNaples.org

