

AFGHANISTAN REFUGEE AMONG “COX HEROES” AWARDED NEARLY \$50,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS BY COX KIDS FOUNDATION

(SAN DIEGO) July 24, 2003 – Shumail Hakimi was born the granddaughter of the king of Mazar-e-Sharif, located in Northern Afghanistan, but her life has been far from a fairy tale. When she was a little girl, Shumail’s family was forced from their home by a rival warlord, and when she was 12, her father, a superintendent of schools, was executed by the Taliban for ignoring their edict and allowing women to be educated.

Shumail and her mother escaped to Pakistan, and after receiving asylum from the United Nations, came to the United States. A recent graduate of Mount Miguel High School in Spring Valley, **Shumail is one of 25 San Diego County students recognized for their commitment to education in the face of adversity, and named a 2003 Cox Heroes scholarship recipient by the Cox Kids Foundation.** An outstanding student who works at a fast food restaurant to help support her disabled mother, Shumail will receive \$1,000 to pursue a career in medicine.

Each year, the Cox Kids Foundation awards up to \$50,000 in scholarships to “Cox Heroes” for their perseverance through adversity and their dedication to learning. Recipients attending a four-year university and adult re-entry students receive \$2,500. Students attending a two-year college or vocational school receive \$1,000. This year, the Cox Kids Foundation awarded \$49,500 in scholarships to Cox Heroes.

The 2003 Cox Heroes scholarship recipients are:

Four-Year (\$2,500) Recipients

Gloria Avila – San Dieguito High School Academy, Encinitas

Moving from her home in Mexico nine years ago was not the easiest transition for Gloria since she didn’t speak the language of her new country. A hopeful student in search of opportunity and education, Gloria learned to speak English within two years and has excelled in her academic work. Maintaining a 3.89 GPA, she became Vice President of the Associated Student Body, a member of AVID, MECHA, the Human Relations Council, Future Teachers of America Club and was named a

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“Who’s Who Among High School Students.” Used as a translator between her high school principal and non-English speaking parents helped Gloria understand how being bilingual can help others. Gloria will study international relations and Latin American studies.

Marisol Campos – San Marcos High School, San Marcos

Struggling to adapt after moving to the United States as a child, Marisol has faced many financial and language barriers. Despite these adversities, Marisol has maintained a 3.8 GPA and is highly involved in her church, CSF, MECHA, after-school tutoring, and AVID. Marisol would like to become a pediatrician. Marisol hopes to study biology at the University of California, San Diego.

April Deibert – Patrick Henry High School, San Diego

With a desire to join the FBI, April plans to study microbiology and political science at the University of California, San Diego. An honors student, April has received awards for Outstanding Achievement in English, Student of the Month, and the Triple E: Excellence, Ethics, Enterprise. She served as president of the California Scholarship Federation and Link Crew, and has been involved with internships as a lab assistant and technician.

Dorothy Hilburn – Helix Charter High School, La Mesa

Serving as a math tutor to her fellow students for three years has inspired Dorothy to become a high school math teacher. She has recruited and trained other tutors, identified weaknesses in the curriculum, developed study aides, and monitored performance. She is highly involved in her church and has contributed to multiple community service projects. Dorothy hopes to attend Christian Heritage College and study education.

Angela Houze – Helix Charter High School, La Mesa

After struggling with Type 1 diabetes throughout high school, Angela has faced many challenges with her health and ability to concentrate. A national honor student, she ranked 88 in a class of 464 students. Angela has a deep interest in scientific studies, and after volunteering with the San Diego Humane Society, has realized her passion for working with animals. She will pursue the two-year veterinary technician program at Mesa College.

Shawn Johnson – Mar Vista High School, Imperial Beach

After surviving a life-threatening surfing accident at 16, Shawn is focused and driven towards achieving his goals. First in his class of 331, he has displayed exceptional dedication to education by maintaining a 4.0 GPA throughout high school. Through his involvement in water polo, volleyball, and football, Shawn has received many awards for his performance and leadership. He is passionate about a career in video production, and hopes to study Film and Digital Media Communications at San Diego State University.

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Susan Lakaraber – Herbert Hoover High School, San Diego

Separated from her parents after war broke out in her native country, Susan and her brother have been raised by their sister in San Diego. She would like to become a doctor and help care for acutely or chronically ill children and young adults. Highly involved in school and community activities, Susan has participated in soccer, MECHA, Link Crew (a program designed to assist and tutor freshman), Women's Studies, the Youth for Recreation club, provided tutoring in elementary schools, and volunteers at Alvarado hospital.

Sarahi Loya – Chula Vista High School, Chula Vista

Maintaining perfect attendance throughout high school, Sarahi is the first in her family to attend college. An honor roll student for four years, she is ranked 20th out of 596 students. She is a strong leader in her church as a Sunday school teacher, youth choir director, and musician. Sarahi is highly involved in her school through extracurricular activities and leadership. She was also the CSF president, and named "Who's Who Among High School Students." Sarahi would like to study biology at the University of California, San Diego to fulfill her dream of becoming a pediatrician and helping families without health care.

Beth Novoa – Herbert Hoover High School, San Diego

Beth would like to study forensic entomology so she can help solve crimes and make safer communities. In high school, Beth excelled academically while playing volleyball and softball, and working part-time. She was a member of the Key Club, National Honor Society, and Link Crew. Beth hopes to attend the University of California, San Diego.

Anna Powell – Grossmont High School, La Mesa

Since seventh grade, Anna has dreamed of becoming a doctor. Ranked 2nd in her class of 455 students, Anna was an honors student with an "A" average. She is highly involved in the community, and has received numerous awards for her achievements within school. Anna was a member of CSF, Link Crew, Vice President of Epicenter Christian Fellowship, and has received four Golden State Exam honors. She has a passion for music and received an Outstanding Performance award in piano, which she teaches.

Julie Raines – Mount Miguel High School, Spring Valley

Living with her mother who emigrated from Vietnam, Julie will be a first generation college student. She was ranked 10th in a class of 449, and has maintained a 3.9 G.P.A. Julie was a member of the CSF, AVID, Upward Bound Math and Science program at San Diego State University, Health Careers Opportunity program at SDSU, and volunteers at Alvarado Hospital. Julie hopes to study microbiology at the University of California, San Diego.

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Maria Rodriguez – Montgomery High School, San Diego

Editor of her school's Spanish-language newspaper, Maria is an award-winning high school journalist and was named an "Outstanding English Media Student." Hoping to study communications at the University of California, San Diego, Maria has spent time shadowing people in the industry. She was a member of CSF, MECHA, and ranked in the top 12% of her class of 542 students.

Two-year (\$1,000) recipients:

Leeanashaa Alexander- Garfield High School, San Diego

In spite of experiencing physical abuse in the home and moving from school to school, Leeanashaa has become an exceptional student, served as ASB president at Roosevelt Jr. High School and received awards in ASB, cheerleading, track and field, and basketball. Hoping to fulfill her dream of becoming an accountant, Leeanashaa will attend City College for two years, then transfer to Clark University in Atlanta, Ga. to study business. She has been described by one teacher as having "great people skills, intelligence and courage."

Heather Allen – Center City High School, Escondido

When faced with the many obstacles from a family battling drug addictions and illnesses, Heather received help from teachers and her school. From this experience, she was inspired to become a teacher. Maintaining a 3.97 GPA and already completing 16 units of college credit, Heather will attend Palomar Community College and work toward a bachelor's degree in education. She was a member of the National Honor Society, Key Club, North County Academic League, California Scholarship Federation, Tennis team, and Link Crew.

Menahile Biru – San Diego High School, San Diego

In search of a better life, Menahile and her family emigrated from Sudan in 1992. With little or no formal education, her family has struggled financially, and her father works two jobs to support the family of six. Becoming a high school drama teacher is Menahile's passion and goal in life. She loves acting, singing, dancing, and working with children. She is an active member of the Black Student Union, Drama Club, and Bible Club. Menahile also teaches Sunday school at her church, and strives to inspire young children.

Shumail Hakimi – Mount Miguel High School, Spring Valley

Forced into exile, experiencing the death of her father at the hands of the Taliban, and emigrating to the U.S. from Afghanistan make up only a fragment of Shumail's history. Her father, who was murdered for allowing women to attend school, instilled in Shumail the value of an education. She maintained a 4.0 GPA while supporting her disabled mother. Grossmont College is her first step in becoming a doctor.

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Jessica Minick – Sunset High School, Encinitas

Jessica's goal is to advance research and developments within biotechnology, and help people understand the importance of maintaining a healthy mind and body. Jessica lives with her godmother and does not receive any financial support from her parents. She has worked multiple jobs while remaining committed to her academics and extra-curricular activities including water polo, and volunteering with Disabled Services and the Pacific Beach Recreation Center. Jessica practices fung shui and yoga, and makes holistic jewelry. She will study science at Mira Costa Community College, and pursue a B.A.

Wendelin Munoz – Mar Vista High School, Imperial Beach

Wendelin's goal is to earn a master's degree in Family Law so she can protect children from abusive parents, alleviate injustices within family life, and prevent tragic consequences for children. An exceptional student, she has maintained a 3.8 GPA while receiving awards in perfect attendance, excellence in citizenship and scholarship. She has also tutored at Bayside Elementary School, and helped senior citizens at St. Charles Nutrition Center. Wendelin hopes to study pre-law at the University of San Diego.

Cynthia Soriano – EastLake High School, Chula Vista

Cynthia hopes to become an engineer and further women's advancement within the industry. She was a member of the Pre-Engineering and Technology Academy while also serving as a mentor for girls in the Science, Engineering, and Technology Club. Cynthia has displayed her involvement in school and community leadership as senior class president, CSF member, Link Crew Leader, and volunteers at Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center. She would like to study engineering.

Jacqueline Soto – Center City High School, Escondido

As a little girl, Jacqueline awoke from a coma only to learn that her mother died in the car accident that nearly took her own life. Jacqueline is highly involved in school and received an award from the mayor of Escondido for her community service. She enjoys poetry and received an honorable mention in a poetry competition. Instilled by her mother the importance of an education, Jacqueline will enter the dental hygienist program at Palomar College.

Jessica Vera – Herbert Hoover High School, San Diego

After moving to the U.S. during high school, Jessica has struggled adapting to the language and culture. Despite these obstacles, she is a 2003 high school graduate at the age of 15. Jessica was a writer for her school newspaper, and she is highly interested in computer technology. Education is her number one priority, and she will attend Grossmont College to study computer engineering.

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Adult Re-Entry (\$2,500):

Amy Britcher - Santee

Amy is currently working toward a degree as a licensed vocational nurse at the Grossmont Health Occupation Center. A single parent with two children, Amy lost her home and had to close her daycare business after her divorce. She is active in her church and volunteers with developmentally disabled adults. Amy says nursing is a “calling within my heart.”

Annette Christensen – El Cajon

A cosmetologist for 18 years, Annette’s goal is to become a licensed vocational nurse. The single mother of three attends Grossmont Health Occupational Center and is expected to graduate in January 2004. She hopes a higher education will give her children a better quality of life. Annette plays the piano and sings.

Rebecca de la Torre - Poway

An aspiring bio-engineer, Rebecca is the only one of 10 siblings to attend college. A single mother of a 13-year-old son, Rebecca was laid off from her job as a lab technician. She currently attends San Diego State University, where she is majoring in mechanical engineering. Rebecca is an active participant in the student chapters of the Society of Women Engineers, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and the Mesa Engineering Program.

Ligita Roberts – San Diego

As a young woman, Ligita dreamed of attending college. However, being a single mother, she dedicated herself to raising two boys and began working full-time to financially support them. Ligita would like to become an investigator for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, where she currently works as an investigator support assistant. She currently attends San Diego City College and will pursue a B.A. in Sociology from the University of California, San Diego.

Established by Cox Communications in 1999, the Cox Kids Foundation is a fund of The San Diego Foundation dedicated to helping San Diego’s children. Funded by employee contributions that are matched 100% by Cox Communications, the Cox Kids Foundation has already awarded \$150,000 in scholarships to students. The foundation also provides grants to local schools for innovative programs, financial assistance through Children’s Hospital for children with hearing disabilities, and most recently, formed a partnership with Make-A-Wish Foundation to make technology wishes come true for children with life-threatening diseases. For more information, visit www.cox.com/sandiego.

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