There’s more good news inside!

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2006 Red Rose Scholars

Back row, left to right: Hunter Lockney, Nicholas Erde, Joseph Joseph, Wilma Nannou, David Chencir, Moses Otua, Issime Avdo, Christopher Overstreet, Mario Genes.

Middle row, left to right: Jason Hare, Murry Elwin Walker, Danton Adkins, Meter Lenn, Markel Butcher, Noemeka C. Nwosu, Carolina Navarro, Kristina Chavners, Twilla Chacona.

Front row, left to right: Hibo Jawia, Jason Cortez, Vlame Guerr, Mylnea Cordova, Abigail Carillo, Lilien Bicanga, and Hanie Khalid.
History of the Red Rose Ball

The Ongoing Tradition

The Red Rose Ball is a gala, to be sure — a major UHD scholarship fundraising event and evening to remember. Fun, elegance, dinner, dancing, red roses, flowing gowns and dashing dinner jackets. But, more than that, it is an event that impacts students’ lives. It sets in motion a lifetime of dividends. The Red Rose Ball is an evening of recognition: scholarship, community service and leadership on the part of 25 deserving students.

Early Memories

The first Red Rose Ball was organized by student members of the Latin American Student Service Organization (LASSO), who believed deserving students needed financial help to attend UHD. Member Armando Diaz chaired the event and enlisted the help of his family. Brothers and fellow students Albert and Ricky, Jr. used a handy pipeline to secure star power at the old Shamrock Hilton. Father Ricky Diaz and his orchestra provided first-class entertainment and mother, Belen, took on the fundraising and logistics.

The three Diaz brothers all graduated from the then University of Houston Downtown College, as UHD was called in the early ’80s. Armando is an attorney, Ricky, Jr. is in financial services, and Albert is a financial director.

Community Support

Apart from acknowledging the scholarship recipients, the Red Rose Ball traditionally pays tribute to local individuals who have professed a long-standing and enduring commitment to higher education, donating time and dollars for student advancement. Community and corporate leaders recognize that UHD makes a significant impact on students’ lives and futures, and also that the value of a university is measured by the extent to which its graduates serve the community.

Red Rose Ball represents the meeting of the brightest and the most generous. It’s a major investment in human capital. UHD and the Red Rose honorees are proud of the milestones over the years, and look forward to a lifelong commitment to education and giving back to the community.

Red Rose Ball Honorees

Through the Years

1983
Mr. and Mrs. Roy H. Cullen
Quintana Petroleum Corporation

1984
Mr. and Mrs. Jackson C. Hinds
Entex

1989
Mr. and Mrs. Gene McDavid
Houston Chronicle

1992
Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Eury
Central Houston, Inc.

1994
George and Lorena Donnelly
S. Ward Howell International, Inc.

1995
Mayor and Mrs. Bob Lanier
City of Houston

1996
Chancellor William P. Hobby
 and Mrs. Hobby
University of Houston System

1997
Mr. and Mrs. Eduardo Aguirre, Jr.
NationsBank

1998
Mr. and Mrs. Philip J. Carroll
Shell Oil Company

2000
Joe and Merrill Hafner
Riviana Foods

2001
Jonathan and Barbara Day
Mayor, Day, Caldwell
 & Keeton, LLP

2002
Rosie Zamora
Telesurveys Research Associates

2004
Gene Vaughan
Vaughan Nelson Investment Management, L.P.

2005
Ralph O’Connor
Ralph O’Connor & Associates

Belen and Ricky Diaz at the 20th Annual Red Rose Ball.
They may have been a Red Rose Scholar when the program first began 25 years ago. Or they may have just earned the distinction this year. But you realize one thing the more you talk with University of Houston-Downtown’s best and brightest – for them, there is no absence of purpose.

And deep down inside their souls that purpose is simple – to become a contributor, a builder, a genuine worker on behalf of humanity.

Oh, sure, they want the extra money and respect that a college degree can bring. They don’t want to live hand to mouth any more, as many of their families have. They don’t want calls from bill collectors in the middle of the night or to worry if the electricity – read that as air conditioning – is going to be cut off in sweltering August because mom’s paycheck had to go to buy grandma’s medication.

With UHD affording access to higher education to those who did not have a crack at it in the past, it is no surprise that many of our students come from humble backgrounds – where sometimes even a high school education seems out of reach. Just ask 2006 Red Rose Scholar Abigail Cedillo, the first in her family to graduate from high school and now on schedule to graduate with high honors in criminal justice next year.

The Jefferson Davis High School graduate figures – correct that, she knows – she can help provide better policing in the Latin community. As fluent in Spanish as she is in English, she knows she can better communicate with the immigrants coming from Central and South America and Mexico.

"Ever since I was young," she says, "police officers in my neighborhood didn’t have a good rap. I think I can help make sure there is equal justice for all."

In other words, the 23-year-old mother simply wants the United States to live up to the standards it set for itself. Abraham Lincoln would be proud. So would Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Chavez. Yes, Abigail understands the biggest enemy America must face is ignorance – correct that, she knows – she can help.

The Jefferson Davis High School graduate figures that she, along with two others, had won the UHD’s Scholars Academy arrived on the Elsk campus.

The rest, as they say, is history. She received a scholarship to UH-D because of her talents in science. One of her professors, Phil Lyons, saw her innate capacity and invited her to work in his lab and she became excited about research.

Her senior year she became a Red Rose Scholar. It was a sketch financially to get both of her parents to the ball, but she’s glad her family spent the extra $75.

"I’m so glad they both came," she says. "It was the first time my parents were aware of what I had achieved. I was so proud and they were so proud."

Today, Abigail in her first year of a Ph.D. program in microbiology and immunology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Maybe, she says, she will help find the cure for AIDS. Or the ebola virus.

In the final analysis, what the Red Rose Scholarship is all about is the force of hope. Without the force of hope, there is only the passing of time, and the anxiety of underachievement and despair.

*Editor's Desk*

**Scholars Have No Absence of Purpose**

by Paul Harasim

**Editor**

*They may have been a Red Rose Scholar when the program first began 25 years ago. Or they may have just earned the distinction this year. But you realize one thing the more you talk with University of Houston-Downtown’s best and brightest – for them, there is no absence of purpose. And deep down inside their souls that purpose is simple – to become a contributor, a builder, a genuine worker on behalf of humanity.*

**Skyline View**

by Celeste Zamora

**Managing Editor**

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**Behind every Red Rose Scholar...**

by Celeste Zamora

**Managing Editor**

*The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes pok ing you with a sharp stick called “truth.” --Dan Rather*

Throughout the history of the Red Rose Ball, scholars have gone on to lead fruitful lives. One constant is the dedicated professor who learns to recognize the rising stars and diamonds in the rough.

“I wasn’t going to apply for the Red Rose Scholarship but my professor, Dr. Alberto Gomez-Rivas, insisted,” said Theo Chacon, a second-time Red Rose Scholarship recipient and student speaker for 2005. “I didn’t think I had a chance. He helped me realize how hard work was important.”

Catherine Orsten and her brother Steve Cachia both received the scholarship. Steve was a three-time scholarship recipient in 1997 and 1998. He graduated in May 1999 with a degree in engineering technology and works for UHD as a Video Network Operations supervisor. “Becoming an (computer) engineer was my dream – and now I am living it,” he says.

Catherine, a consultant in psychological services, divides her time between Brazil, where her husband works for an oil company, and Malta, where her parents live. Now, she’ll be making trips to Great Britain to visit her daughter, Kimberly (‘04), who has been accepted to the University of Essex for graduate studies in cognitive neuropsychology. All three, Catherine, Steve and Kimberly, have undergraduate degrees from UH-D and all three were taught by Dr. Marilee Cunningham, associate professor of English.

“We started off with so few scholarships at the first Red Rose Ball,” says Dr. Cunningham. “It’s absolutely great that we are now able to support 25 scholars compared to the beginning, and the endowed scholarships make it even more incredible.”

Dr. Gary Greer, assistant dean in University College, gets a kick out of knowing students from the time they enter the university, and watching them transform into well-prepared graduates. He keeps a record of all the letters he writes and often surprises students.

“Some are amazed at the observations I make,” he says. “They don’t often see all their strong qualities, and I think it’s important for us to point these out.”
The 25th Anniversary UHD Red Rose Ball – the university’s signature fundraiser for scholarships – attracted more than 300 guests, including Houston Mayor Bill White and his wife Andrea.

“What better gift can you give to another human being than to give them the value of an education?” White asked the crowd seated at tables covered in red satin with roses for centerpieces.

President George H. W. Bush couldn’t be there in person but sent a videotaped message to the April 28 event that was held at the Four Seasons Hotel. He saluted both the honorees of the ball, Charles and Betti Friedel Saunders, for their commitment to giving access to college to deserving students.

Bush, who was a client of Charles Saunders when he was in the oil business, said it came as no surprise to him that the Saunderses were honored.

“Both the Saunders and UHD realize there is a new world to be built, but it will not come to pass without vision, commitment, passion, and respect for the human personality and frailties of man,” Bush said. “So congratulations to both the Saunders and UHD on this 25th Anniversary of the Red Rose Ball.”

Jose Grifin, anchor for KRIV Fox TV, served as emcee for the event that – in addition to naming the 25 Red Rose Scholars for 2006 – also honored the late Larry Jones as well as Nelly Quijano and her late husband Dominic.

The annual Red Rose Ball raises funds to provide scholarships to students who excel in academics, leadership and community service.

Helping students succeed has long had appeal to the Saunderses. Charles and his wife Betti set up a foundation to contribute to education and charities in the early ’90s.

They have been enthusiastic supporters of UHD’s O’Kane Theatre through scholarships and patronage.

“We could have bought a multimillion dollar house in River Oaks, but we thought a foundation that helped people was a better use of our money,” Charles Saunders said.

Betti Saunders, who like her husband came from modest means, has been moved by the appreciation of students and their parents.

“So many of the students we have met were the first in their family to go to college,” she said. “We also have met many parents who said their children wouldn’t have gotten an education without scholarships. Nothing is more fun or more gratifying than helping people in this way.”

At a reception for scholars before the ball, Lyn Jones enjoyed visiting with the students whose future was a focus of her late husband, Larry Jones. Jones was a former managing partner of the international accounting firm of Deloitte and Touche, and the former chair of the Red Rose Ball, the Scholarship Committee and UHD President Max Castillo’s Advisory Council.

In Larry Jones’ memory, Tom Harper, current chair of the President’s Advisory Council, announced at the ball that a Larry Jones Red Rose scholarship fund had been established.
“It’s to give kids who apply themselves an opportunity to go further,” Mrs. Jones explained. Nelly and the late Dominic Quijano received the first Red Rose Community Service Award. The Quijanos, who left Cuba when Fidel Castro brought communism to the country, came to Houston with very little and now the Quijano family owns 16 McDonald’s franchises. They have used their success to support local programs, including schools, churches, mobile health and dental clinics and civic organizations.

“This is a wonderful evening,” Nelly Quijano observed. “My husband and I have been strong believers in education all our lives. I’m so proud that my daughter Mariselle is a graduate of UHD.”

Students were grateful that they were honored with Red Rose Scholarships.

“Many of the Red Rose Scholars have overcome difficult challenges. Vilma Garza, a native of El Salvador, spoke to the audience on behalf of the students. She told them that she flunked two of three classes when she first started school 14 years ago.

“I wasn’t disciplined enough and my language skills weren’t good enough,” she said. “So I had to quit.”

But she never stopped dreaming of going back to college to become a bilingual elementary school teacher. Three years ago, after becoming more disciplined and working on her language skills, she returned to college.

“I believe in education so much that I read to my two children when they were still in my belly,” she said. Garza said her experience and that of other scholars at UHD should be a lesson to young people everywhere.

“Never give up,” she said. “Never give up and your dreams can come true.”

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Microbiology major Moses Osoro used to work 40 hours a week. “Now,” he said, “I can spend more time in school.”

Left: Nelly Quijano (white dress) is surrounded by loving family and friends as she and her late husband, Dominic, are recognized for their unwavering support of the Houston community. The Red Rose Award was created to recognize the efforts of selected Houstonians who have engaged the community at a high level through the support of education.

Below: Dr. Max Castillo, UHD president, was proud to announce the Red Rose Ball raised close to $500,000. Proceeds benefit Red Rose Scholars, high-achieving students in the College of Sciences and Technology, as well as transfer students at UH-Downtown.
Flower Power

David Cherian, Biology
David, 20, plans to attend medical school and is active in the Health Professions Organization. He participates in undergraduate research projects and has published his poetry in UHD’s Bayou Review Literary Journal. He’s given his time to Bible school, the poor and underprivileged, the environment and a pediatric clinic.

Denise Adams, Interdisciplinary Studies
After earning an associate degree more than a quarter-century ago, Denise, 50, enrolled at UHD to study information science. She works as a reporter, opinion page columnist and editor at the Fort Bend Herald Coaster.

Nydia Cordero, Structural Analysis and Design
Nydia, 22, received an associate degree from Miami Dade College before enrolling in UHD. After earning a degree, Nydia wants to work at an engineering firm to increase her knowledge and gain practical experience. Then she wants to become a college professor.

Nicolas Endre, Computer Information Systems
Nicholas, 23, attended Houston Community College where he was selected as the best computer science student before enrolling in UHD. He works in the Student Activities & Events Department and is active in the Phi Theta Kappa honors society. Nicholas also co-chaired the Campus Activities Board Publicity Committee.

Henia Abid, Applied Microbiology
Henia, 24, attended North Harris College where she was chosen as the best student in math and microbiology. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. to study microbes, pathogenesis of diseases and the body’s immune response. She helped with food supplies for Hurricane Katrina victims at the Astrodome.

Lilian Bisonga, Accounting
Lilian, 38, has an associate degree in computer specialization from Houston Community College. She wants her CPA and a second degree in finance before she moves into an international career. Currently, she works at JP Morgan Chase. She helped feed Hurricane Katrina victims.

Jaime Avila, Finance
Jaime, 21, dreams of starting his own real estate business to “help people with better and more affordable prices” on land. He will work as a summer intern for the law firm of Bracewell & Giuliani and currently works at Houston Community College.

Kristyna Chovanacova, Computer Information Systems/Supply Chain Management
Kristyna, 28, hopes to manage quality control in a multinational corporation. She has served in leadership roles with university organizations, has also prepared packages for troops overseas and worked with Child Protective Services – along with her paid position at an art gallery.

Abigail Cedillo, Criminal Justice
Abigail, 23, is a full-time student, a part-time worker and a full-time wife and mother of a 2½-year-old daughter. She helped start Best Leaders United for Excellence (B.L.U.E.), an organization that helps new students adjust to college life. She is the first in her family to graduate from high school.

Teofilo Chacon, Structural Analysis and Design
Teofilo, 34, currently works as a full-time heavy equipment operator for the City of Houston and carries a full load at UHD. As a member of Scholars Academy, he did research on damage to concrete beams. Teofilo plans to work for an engineering firm or the Texas Department of Transportation after graduation.

Norma Calvert, Business Administration
Norma, 55, received her diploma in applied photography from the Art Institute of Houston and enrolled in UHD to pursue her bachelor’s degree. She wants to continue toward an MBA, attend law school or work as a human resources manager while studying employment law. She went back to school after her two children finished college.

Jana Carter, Biological and Physical Science/Philosophy
Jana, 25, wants “to promote social change and have the education that best provides me with that opportunity.” She works with expert witnesses to derive complex analyses for proving negligence. Some of her work has resulted in vital policy changes regulating nursing homes.

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Mario Garza, Structural Analysis and Engineering
Mario, 33, hopes to work for an engineering firm or financial institution in a commercial consulting area. He will become the first person in his family to complete college when he graduates. His parents worked long hours to support his education and helped him to understand the value of work ethics and career advancement. After obtaining his bachelor’s degree, Johnson plans to pursue his graduate and doctoral degrees and then become a university professor.

Lesbia Rocha, Education
Lesbia, 34, participated in an English as a Second Language program when she was in school. Her experience foster-parenting prompted her to change career goals from geology. She plans to earn a bachelor’s degree, masters and perhaps a Ph.D. in education. Meanwhile, she volunteers for such organizations as the Chinquapin School and the YMCA.

Hiba Zwiya, Biotechnology
Hiba, 24, a native of Lebanon, completed coursework at the UHD English Language Institute and studied at Houston Community College before returning to UHD. Now she is pursuing a career in microbiology to middle school students and intends to pursue a doctoral degree in molecular biology in order to conduct research on diseases such as cancer and AIDS.

Vilma Garza, Education
Vilma, 35, the mother of two young sons, volunteers regularly at her children’s elementary school, in addition to attending UHD full time. These activities are preparing the childhood education major for a career as a bilingual elementary school teacher. “Teaching,” Vilma says, “has been my passion for a very long time.”

You Too Can Be A Red Rose Scholar!
If you are a UHD student who has a 3.5 GPA or above can aspire to be a Red Rose Scholar. Find out more at: http://www.uhd.edu/admissions/financial_aid/scholarships/ or visit the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid.

Deadline: Fall 2006
Rhonda Scherer, ’97, Michelle Falcon, ’02, and Po Chu Anges Leung, ’90, always will have three things in common — each graduated from UHD, each works at the university and each has felt the pride and great esteem of being selected as a Red Rose Scholar.

Rhonda Scherer, assistant director of the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center, earned her BS in Professional Writing.

“Leaving UHD was never an option,” said Rhonda, who suffered the tragic loss of a child before starting school at the university. “UHD gave me the opportunity to start a new life for myself. Getting the Red Rose Scholarship gave me tremendous pride.”

Rhonda was well served by the financial support provided by the Red Rose Scholarship. Ultimately, however, Rhonda suggests that it is not the money that makes the Red Rose Scholarship so special, but rather “the lifelong memories it creates for students.”

Michelle Falcon, assistant director of student activities and events, graduated with a BS in Criminal Justice.

Michelle was awarded the Red Rose Scholarship in 2001. “The award has always been very prestigious,” Michelle said. “I worked even harder after I got the award. It makes you feel that all things are possible, and it reminds you that people do care about your education.”

Michelle’s college success was especially significant because she was the first person in her family to graduate from a university.

Anges Leung, director of testing services, first came to UHD as an international student from Hong Kong, studying in the English language Institute (ELI). Not being a native speaker of the English language, Anges was aware of the challenges she would face in pursuing a four-year degree.

Before she could even enroll at UHD, she had to earn a GED. Anges went on to earn a BS in Applied Mathematics.

The Red Rose Scholarship, which she won three years in row, was a significant contributor to her college success.

The Red Rose Scholarship made it possible,” she says. “Because tuition for international students is so expensive, I would’ve had to quit.”

Anges knows why she and her colleagues have stayed at UHD. “We are here because we love this place, and we want to give back for all that we were given.”