



New Leader Scholarship Announcement

June 6, 2004

Juliza Perez Honored By LA Times as “Foster Care Hero”

JULIZA PEREZ was honored by the Los Angeles Times on June 6, 2004 as a Foster Care Hero. While Juliza was a student at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, she helped start a peer-mentoring program to help youth transition from the foster-care system into college life. A documentary of this program was filmed using Juliza as a central role model in the development of the program.

When most youth leave the foster care system at around 19 years of age, they have no permanent support system or adult to turn to for guidance. Former foster youth Juliza Perez, a Phi Beta Kappa student in Mass Communications and Sociology at UC Berkeley, is determined to change that. She received her degree from the University of California at Berkeley this spring.

Her dedication to helping others transition from the foster care system into independent adult living has become a passion she takes far beyond the classroom. Perez worked as a Peer Counselor for the Community College Foundation's Independent Living Program. For the past three years, she has also served as a motivational speaker and mentor for freshman foster youth preparing for college.

Perez is a founding member of The Community College Foundation and DCFS "Mentoring Collaborative" which develops and implements resources to create "Campus Peer Mentoring Programs" at community colleges. Perez demonstrates not only her own success, but also a determination to bring that success within the reach of other foster youth.

"My success has depended and continues to rely on individuals and organizations that supported me when I felt like quitting encouraged me when I was down, and pushed me to greater heights. These individuals and organizations are not strangers. They have become my extended family. They are the rock I lean on," said Perez.