



Press Release

For Immediate Release
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Firebaugh High School Student Wins Prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship

Lynwood, Calif. – Firebaugh High School student Melody Esqueda never could have imagined that the large package she came home to find just a few weeks ago would change her life so drastically and help her reach a milestone she never thought possible.

Esqueda is one of 1,000 students from across the nation selected to receive the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship, providing her with a good-through-graduation scholarship to any college or university of her choice.

“The amount of happiness that followed after I opened the acceptance package was unparalleled and still a moment I can recount very vividly today,” Esqueda said. “Being able to say I am a part of the GMS family is the realization of a dream, of an obligation to go far and to take as many people as I can with me.”

More than 52,000 high school seniors applied for the award – given to high-performing, low-income students – putting Esqueda in the 2 percent of students who received it.

“We are so thrilled for Melody and her family for having met this amazing feat that few others do,” said LUSD Board of Education President Briseida Gonzalez. “Through this scholarship, Melody will receive the financial and academic support she needs to become a successful college graduate and serve as a role model to her siblings, peers and the next generation of leaders in the Lynwood community.”

As a recipient of the prize, which is funded by a \$1.6 billion grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the USC-bound student will be the first in her family to receive a scholarship, attend a private university and graduate from college.

The scholar said she plans on getting bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees and is considering pursuing careers in political science, environmental science, business or the cinematic arts.

To cap off her academic achievements, Esqueda, who has a 4.65 GPA, will be the valedictorian for Firebaugh High School’s graduation ceremony in June.

“I am a graduating senior of Marco Antonio Firebaugh High School, which is named after a great lawmaker and passionate champion of the people,” she said. “He brought us AB 540, which has allowed

for many of my classmates and dear friends to gain the opportunity of a lifetime – education. It would be an honor to follow in his footsteps.”

In addition to being accepted to USC, Esqueda was also accepted to Wesleyan and Pepperdine universities, Carleton College, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine and UC Santa Barbara.

Esqueda said one of her goals after graduating college is to return to Lynwood as a mentor to young students and help make a difference to the community that afforded her a solid foundation for a lifetime of success.

“This scholarship recognizes the phenomenal work that Melody has put into her entire educational career thus far, and we couldn’t be more proud of what this extraordinary young lady has accomplished,” said LUSD Superintendent Paul Gothold. “Melody epitomizes what Lynwood Unified strives to do every day, which is to produce hard-working and talented students who are reaching new heights and striving for excellence as 21st century citizens.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

GatesMillennium1: Firebaugh High School student Melody Esqueda is one of 1,000 students from across the nation selected to receive the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship, providing her with a good-through-graduation scholarship to any college or university of her choice.

GatesMillennium2: The Lynwood Unified School District Board of Education congratulates Firebaugh High School student Melody Esqueda on her Millennium Gates Scholarship Award. From left, Firebaugh High School Principal Tony Hua, LUSD Board President Briseida Gonzalez, mother Rebecca Martinez, student Melody Esqueda, father Rudy Esqueda and Superintendent Paul Gothold.

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The Lynwood Unified School District is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support systems for students and staff.

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