

GFFNSF Scholarship Recipients – 2019
Total Value of Awards = \$17,500

George Mason – (\$1,500 Scholarship; \$1,000 to Endowment Recipient) – total = \$5,500

1. *Ana Vasquez Veliz* – is a single mother of 2 boys currently pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Nursing. She plans to continue onto a Master’s degree program. Her interest in nursing began at a young age when, her mother was studying to become a Home Care Aid and would bring home her school books for Ana to translate and read to her. When Ana had her first son, she was so comforted by the nurses and impressed that they provided not only medical care, but also mental support and compassion. Ana wanted to be able to provide this type of support for others in their most vulnerable moments. As a Latina, Ana plans to focus on the Latin community educating them on health-related topics.
2. *Bindu Bista Dharmi* -immigrated from Nepal 3 years ago. Before leaving Nepal, she received a Diploma in General Medicine and completed a clinical practicum at Seti Zonal Hospital in Nepal. Due to financial difficulties, she could not continue her nursing studies and began working at various Health Posts throughout Nepal. Her passion for nursing brought her to the United States to pursue her dream. She is working hard to obtain her Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing while supporting her family in Nepal. Her goal is to become a critical care Nurse Practitioner and provide health care to low income people.
3. *Silvana Perez* - is a graduate student pursuing a Master’s Degree in Education. She is a single mother who plans to work as an Elementary School teacher in the Fairfax County School system in diverse and low-income areas. As she attains her dream of becoming a teacher, she will also be able to work toward another dream of hers – getting her own place that she and her son can call home. In her own words, “My main goal is to reach happiness and to show my son that nothing is impossible if you truly work hard for it.”
4. Endowment Recipient – still to be decided by the University

Northern Virginia Community College – (\$1,500 Scholarship, 2 from Endowment) – total = \$12,000

1. *Ligia Decaro (Fairfax County)* – is from Venezuela and a mom of 2 boys. With a Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science, she is currently pursuing an associate degree in Accounting. Her long-term goal is to become a CPA.
2. *Rebekah Reaves (Fairfax County)* – is a single mother of 3 special needs children. She was a dedicated Army wife for 15 years but is now single and pursuing a degree in Interior Design. At 40 with just a high school education, she is currently pursuing a degree in Interior Design. Once completed, she plans to move to Washington State to be near her family and attend a 4 year University to complete her Bachelor’s degree and obtain accreditations to be competitive in the Interior Design market.
3. *Melissa Carbaja (Fairfax County)* – is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. She served 4 years and is now pursuing her dream to open a gym with her twin sister. Melissa is currently

completing her Associate Degree in Business Administration and then plans to attend GMU to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology. One of six children raised by a single mother, she is determined to make her dream a reality.

4. *Sothearinh Thach (Fairfax County)* – has been working since she was 14 years old. She realized in her early 20's that education was the key to improving herself and advancing. She is pursuing a degree in Information Technology because there is such a large job market for IT professionals. Her dream is to finish at NVCC with a 4.0 GPA and transfer to a 4 year college and work towards a Masters degree in Information Technology.
5. *Dimple Jamine Oliva (Fairfax County)* – was born and raised in the Philippines where poverty is one of the biggest problems. Her passion for nursing began at a young age when she had to care for her grandfather who had Asthma and Bronchitis and then her mother who was diagnosed with cancer. While her mother was hospitalized, Jamine was struck by how compassionate and professional the nurses were. She decided she wanted to be a nurse so she could bring empathy, support, and unparalleled health care to the sick. Once she obtains her degree, she hopes to work as a hospital nurse full time.
6. *Ellaha Momand (Alexandria, VA)* – is from Afghanistan and came to this country 2 ½ years ago. She is currently pursuing a degree in Biochemistry with plans to become a medical doctor – either a heart specialist or cardiac surgeon. She realizes the huge responsibility doctors have for their patients and she desires to be someone who can help others with the depth of knowledge in her discipline and, also, to become someone in whom her patients can put their trust.
7. *Rebecca Wichmann (Fairfax County)* – is pursuing a degree in Computer Science. She works full time and attends school full time. It's a difficult time for her, but she remains empowered by the light at the end of the tunnel, that her work and perseverance will result in a good, stable job with strong benefits.
8. *Cariza Anna Opana (Fairfax County)* – is pursuing a degree in Liberal Arts. Cariza began her college career in her hometown of Manila, Philippines. Unfortunately, anxiety and depression caused her to drop out and work in various industries to make ends meet. When her family moved to the United States, she decided to return to school and earn a college degree. Her dream is to finish her Bachelor's Degree in the United States and return to the Philippines to obtain a Masters degree. She hopes that she will be able to raise awareness of mental health in her home country and fight the stigma it has there. She has published her first collection of poetry and prose where she talks of her battle with depression and anxiety. She donates a portion of the proceeds from her book sales to various organizations in the Philippines who promote conversations about Mental Health.