



SUMMER/FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER



HOPE
CommUnity Center
Building Community. Enriching Lives.

DACA Students Step Up to the Capitol

Dreams Just Beginning at Trinity for Two DREAMers

Growing up together, Hannia Barbosa and Yoseline Rodriguez always dreamt of having the opportunity to attend college. Like many other high school seniors, the idea of moving over 800 miles from home to college was a bit intimidating. However, as they stepped into their senior year of high school, both students pushed themselves to apply to Trinity Washington University in D.C., Sister Ann Kendrick's alma mater.

When Yoseline first learned of her acceptance to Trinity University, she expressed, **"at first it was all a dream, but now it's reality."** Both Yoseline and Hannia received president's scholarships of fifteen thousand dollars and ten thousand dollars respectively to attend the college. A loyal Trinity alumna contributed another \$50,000 towards their education to turn their dreams into reality.

As Yoseline and Hannia moved to Washington to study communications and anthropology, respectively, they understand the importance of their education not only for themselves, but for their Apopka community.

"This means that there's progress. We're making this community proud because we're showing other students that we can do it, that it doesn't matter where you were born." -Yoseline

This sentiment and their lived example impact the peers that they have grown with in their time at Hope. Yoseline and Hannia are two of one hundred DACA students attending Trinity.

With the dream of a college diploma one step closer, Hannia commented, "we will never forget

where we come from." Hannia and Yoseline packed a couple of bags, a lifetime of memories, and a wealth of knowledge for the journey. Families and friends joined them at the airport to send them off with love and blessings. All of us at Hope are so proud of both Yoseline and Hannia.





From Colombia to Columbia

Tatiana Calvo's story is one of surprises, difficult decisions, and, ultimately, hope. Hope and faith changed Tatiana's life. And similarly, as Tatiana dedicates time to her studies, she is changing the lives of others. Tatiana is a DACA recipient from Colombia, a volunteer and intern at Hope CommUnity Center, a student at Columbia University and a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (JKCF) scholar. But her story is much deeper than that, and her aspirations go much further.

"Being a lawyer will give me the opportunity to bridge the gap between law and compassion. In delicate law cases, like immigration, it is critical to connect compassion with the cases being worked on."

- Tatiana

Originally from Bogotá, Colombia, Tatiana and her mother emigrated to the United States with dreams of new educational and business opportunities. After years of difficult court proceedings with a lawyer who mishandled the family's case, Tatiana's mother and brother were suddenly detained and deported. Immigration officers gave Tatiana two choices: hide or return to Colombia. She said it didn't feel right to be away from her family, and she was burdened by constant shame regarding her status as an immigrant. Nonetheless, she stayed in the U.S. with a vision of achieving her educational goals and career ambitions of becoming a lawyer.

Before the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) order was issued in 2012, Tatiana worked many odd jobs

just to pay the bills. Having to pay out of state tuition was incredibly expensive and most colleges in Florida would not admit her as an undocumented student. Tatiana's friends united at one of her birthdays to pay for her first credit hours at Seminole State College.

In that first course she met Eli Garcia, a DREAMer herself and a community organizer at Hope. Eli enthusiastically invited Tatiana to visit Hope to learn about the Seminole State College/Hope scholarship and meet other DREAMers. Tatiana's life was forever changed.

With help from Hope and school, Tatiana learned about, applied for, and was awarded a JKCF scholarship that covers her tuition at Columbia University in New York and an immersive internship. This summer, Tatiana chose Hope for her internship work site. She helped file DACA renewals for the Immigration Services department and volunteered in College and Career Access for College 101, a summer program designed to help students transition from high school graduation to their first day in college.



Tatiana finished her internship at Hope and headed back to Columbia University where she continues her studies to obtain a law degree. Thank you and best wishes, Tatiana!

FAMILIAR FACES

For the past two and a half years, Teresa Young has had the privilege, challenge and blessing of working with Hope CommUnity Center's (HCC) mission as Director, College and Career Access Program. Now, it is with immense **pleasure** that Hope shares news of Teresa's internal transition to serve as HCC's new **Director of Donor Relations**. Teresa says of her new role, "I am **enthusiastic** about continuing my work with HCC's mission and am painfully aware that our present moment—in its economic, political, social, and spiritual senses—demands, more than ever, **Hope's work of building the beloved community.**"

A message from Teresa:

*Hope CommUnity Center thanks **you** for your continued support of our mission and programs. Our staff is an exceptional team of creative talents. Our community is full of **resilient spirit** and **tireless effort** to fight for social justice. And you, our donors, are **invaluable contributors** to the ways that we build and sustain HCC's mission of empowering our communities through education, advocacy, and spiritual growth.*

*I thank you for your dedication to Hope, and I invite you to introduce yourself to me via e-mail, phone, or in person if I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you. Dedication, humility and faith continue to guide my work in this new position of donor relations, and I look forward to dialoguing with you as we sculpt our world to more clearly reflect our **dreams of peace and justice.***

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Maggi Noyes is proud of her Massachusetts roots. She was born, raised, and educated in the state that boasts the #1 education standards in the country by many measures. She graduated from Bridgewater State University in 2015 with a degree in Social Work.

Visiting Hope during a Service Learning Immersion, Maggi gained a new view on educational systems in this country. During the trip, she met a distraught student, Hannia Barbosa, who spoke openly about being ridiculed in front of other classmates for doing poorly on a test. Since others struggled with the test as well, Hannia felt singled out. Maggi was touched by the strength and courage it took Hannia to give details about this moment to a large group of people, many of whom she did not know. This experience was all Maggi needed to join Notre Dame Mission Volunteers AmeriCorps and be part of something meaningful.

In her two years, Maggi built relationships with students who were dreaming of post-secondary success. It was her role to give these students the resources they needed to graduate from high school, transition to college, and ultimately begin working towards their goals.

Maggi has since transitioned from the College Career Access Program Assistant during her two years in NDAmeriCorps to the **Director, College and Career Access Program**. She will maintain relationships with students, parents, college and technical schools, and high school counselors to provide students with academic and professional opportunities, as well as personal growth.

What does education mean to Maggi? “Power”



NEW PLACES



Yenny Atuesta has always enjoyed volunteering and helping others. In Colombia, she helped adults study to finish their high school diplomas. She also volunteered with a nonprofit that rescued homeless children from life on the street. Those experiences helped her realize her passion for helping others. She and her husband moved to Central Florida in 2004.

Yenny found out about Hope Community Center and its AmeriCorps program because of a flier from her daughter's school. She contacted HCC's AmeriCorps site director Laura Firtel and instantly fell in love with Hope and AmeriCorps. She joined the AmeriCorps 2016-2017 team as the Adult Education Coordinator, where she worked with the GED and MOMS programs. This August, she was hired as the *Academic Support Program Assistant* to support all adult educational programming part-time. She will coordinate MOMS, GED, and Hope's new ESOL program that will launch in October.

She has loved working with adults at Hope because here she has been able to be a part of making dreams come true. She feels honored and proud to walk with them to learn English and earn their high school diploma. Many of the students Yenny works with have faced unimaginable injustices in their lives. Their drive to better themselves educationally and in life is a motivator to Yenny. She is determined to encourage her students to keep moving forward.

What does education mean to Yenny? “Empowerment”

Lashae Copeland is intimately aware how closely woven her liberation is tied to others. She says that as a black woman and a first-generation college student she needed a lot of help from others. Help, in her words, is the intentional effort to educate people with the purpose of creating alternative systems for them to live in.

Before joining Hope's AmeriCorps team, Lashae studied Political Science at Florida State University. While serving at SSC, she earned a Master's at UCF in Public Administration and Non-Profit Management.

Lashae was a Notre Dame Mission Volunteer AmeriCorps for two years where she served as the Civic Scholars Coordinator at Seminole State College. She led students on tours to learn more deeply about the complicated issues associated with environmental racism, mass incarceration, and more.

As Hope's *Community Organizer*, Lashae will play the role of the thinker, creator, and dreamer of a just society to begin crafting alternative education, justice, and environmental systems for and with the Apopka community. In October, Lashae will begin offering racial justice trainings for staff, board members, *Sin Fronteras* Youth Group, and AmeriCorps members. Through these efforts, she hopes to bridge the gap between the local black community and Hope to create a just and equitable world for both communities.

What does education mean to Lashae? “Liberation”





A Sacred Tradition Continues

Senior Graduation at Hope Community Center is a beautiful and sacred tradition. This year, we honored the service and legacy of fifteen Hope seniors. Some of these students first came through HCC's doors as young children and some just a year ago.

This year's graduation was held at HCC's North campus. The graduates, all dressed in their formal caps and gowns, were escorted by fellow *Sin Fronteras* Youth Group members into the community room. They were greeted by tearful, proud parents along with Hope staff, board members, and community members who celebrated their special night.

Near the end of the ceremony, a total of \$50,000 in scholarships was given out to 37 deserving seniors and HCC college students to recognize their academic excellence and help ease the financial burdens of college. Students receiving local scholarships will attend seven different educational institutions in Florida. In addition to the scholarships, the Youth and Family team recognized the personal achievements of some of the seniors.



Congratulations, seniors!

Thank you to the many donors who gave so generously to Hope's Scholarship Fund. You make a great difference in the lives of these young students and for all those they will impact in the future.



Outstanding Service Award, Reyna Amaya | Overcoming Borders Award, Jose Monico & Marian Barrios
Sin Fronteras Award, Luz Calderon | Global Citizen Award, Hannia Barbosa



Love Knows No Borders

On July 15, Hope CommUnity Center hosted a screening of the documentary, *Indivisible*, giving viewers an opportunity to learn about three of America's DREAMers. The enduring image of the film shows Hope volunteer Evelyn Rivera and two other DREAMers peering through the spaces between thick metal bars that form a dividing wall on the border of the U.S. and Mexico, in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora (in Mexico). From the Mexican side, the arms of the young people's deported family

members reach across the border to hug their DREAMer family members as best they could.

The film has also been shown at a variety of film festivals around the U.S. *Indivisible* is subtitled: "Love Knows No Borders." It is billed as a "heart-wrenching exploration of the human cost of U.S. immigration policy." Thank you Evelyn for sharing your time and stories.

My First Day on the Job: Hurricane Irma Relief

A Reflection from Moniqua Cisneros

"This has been a day!" my new coworker exclaimed as we wound down from an exciting morning and afternoon. Friday, September 15 was scheduled to be my first day serving as a Notre Dame Mission Volunteer AmeriCorps member at Hope CommUnity Center. My regularly scheduled day turned into disaster relief day in response to Hurricane Irma.

With support from major community officials, Central Florida Jobs with Justice, Organize Florida, Farmworker Association of Florida, Florida Immigrant Coalition, Volunteer UCF, OESPA and more, Hope CommUnity Center staff, along with volunteers, and current and former ND AmeriCorps members, delivered food, ice and water to the neighborhoods of South Apopka, Brightwood Manor, Rock Springs, and Chalet North. These communities were experiencing power outages and shortages of essentials after Hurricane Irma. Operation BBQ Relief, Kenny's BBQ in Clermont, and Flame Boss in Apopka, cooked and delivered enough food to feed over 1500 people. Jonathan Van Pelt, the club manager at the Sam's Club in Apopka, donated 4 truck beds of ice and 10 pallets of water. The heavy lifting to offload these supplies was conducted by the local Apopka Fire Station 1. We give a big 'thank you' to Mayor Joe Kilsheimer and Commissioner Diane Velazquez for their contributions. All donated goods were available for families to pick up at Hope CommUnity Center South and were also loaded into vans to give to people door to door.

After finally taking a seat, my first thoughts were not fixated on how drained my body felt, but how many genuine smiles we

received from the many residents of Apopka who were out of power, water, and food. Needless to say, this disaster relief day was an absolute success. As my coworker declared, "It happened, and it happened well."

Our work was not over. Many other organizations and volunteers reached out to Hope CommUnity Center on the following day to offer help. A huge "Thank You" goes out to American Red Cross, WFTV Channel 9's Nancy Alvarez, Michelle Stevens and families of Avalon Park, Pop Warner's Football team along with their cheerleaders, UCF Volunteers, Notre Dame AmeriCorps Volunteers, Cox Media, Amy Lynch, Randy Ross and Channel 13's Ybeth Bruzal and all contributors to the "I-4 for Florida" donation drive for donating their time, energy, and hard work. HCC along with our contributors were able to prepare over 150 bags full of food, toiletries, and first aid supplies to even more of the families in four Apopka communities.





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Mission: Hope CommUnity Center is a service learning community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida's immigrant and working poor communities through education, advocacy, and spiritual growth.

Education Spotlight: GED the Next Step to Improving “Life and Family”



Johana Cervantes began her journey to obtain her GED nearly two years ago. Previously, she had been attending the program GROWS where she improved her English and learned about Hope CommUnity Center.

Her path has not been easy. Johana is from Mexico where she studied until the ninth grade. She came to the United States in 1998 for only a few months, but during that time she met the man who would become her husband. In order to get married they returned to Mexico and then came back to the U.S. to live in this country. They have 3 children, and work independently. Johana has had to divide her time between being a mom, working, and studying to obtain the GED.

Accompanied by Hope CommUnity Center, she has expanded her knowledge and improved her skills. In early August, after taking some pretests, she signed up to take the official GED Reasoning Through Language Arts test, and passed it with a score of 152. This is a huge achievement for someone whose first language is not English. Now, Johana is focused on studying to pass the other tests: Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies.

Johana firmly believes that through education she can improve her own life and her family's. She wants to receive her GED so she can continue her education and study Business Management.

Learn more about Academic Support at Hope:

- Visit hcc-offm.org.
- Contact Yenny Atuesta at 407.917.0411 or yatuesta@hcc-offm.org



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