



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

REL student 1 of 300 nationally to earn \$20,000 in scholarships from Dell Foundation

Robert E. Lee High School senior Sarafina Andrew is one of 300 students across the nation to be awarded college scholarship funds from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation's Dell Scholars Program.

The 17-year-old is the second student in Goose Creek CISD history to earn the prestigious Dell scholarship, which will provide her with \$20,000 to continue her higher education for the next six years.

Sarafina said the scholarship has changed her life, chiefly by releasing some stress about paying for school. "It also built up my self-esteem and gives me a feeling that I can accomplish anything in life," she said.

Sarafina is a member of Lee AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, which is a preparatory program offered at each Goose Creek CISD high school to help students enhance their chances of going to college by improving their academic focus and organizational skills. She credits much of her academic success to the program. She joined AVID as a junior at the urging of Lee AVID campus coordinator Mr. Willie Miller.

"He gave me focus and assured me that college and my dreams were possible," she said.

Mr. Miller said when Sarafina entered the Lee AVID program as a junior she was very reserved, shy, and fearful of the methodologies being taught.

"She wasn't sure she could live up to the academic expectations that we were now demanding from her. In fact, she often made comments about her nervousness, and it wasn't unusual for her to have the occasional shutdown during our weekly collaborative learning sessions," Mr. Miller said. "She could have quit and discontinued the uncomfortable feeling she was experiencing being new to AVID; however, she eventually faced her fears and developed into a student who knows her identity, understands the value of a college degree, and thinks critically about her purpose in life."

Mr. Miller said that earning a Dell Scholarship is only one confirmation of how Sarafina has persevered throughout her time in high school.

"She is as determined as they come, and her entire AVID family is extremely proud of her. Simply put, she has accomplished the ultimate AVID goal of being accepted into multiple four-year universities while establishing herself as an independent learner for life," he said.

At Lee, Sarafina is also an active member of the Interact Club and French Club.

Sarafina, like most of the Dell Scholars, will be a first-generation college student and was chosen because she participates in an approved college readiness program (AVID) and maintains at least a 2.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale while dealing with personal responsibilities at home or in their communities.

Sarafina will receive \$20,000 to continue her higher education for the next six years.

More than just a check, the Dell Scholars Program also provides its students with technology, resources and mentoring to ensure they have the support they need to obtain a college degree.

The additional resources have contributed to the program's retention rate of almost 95 percent, well above the national average of 23 percent for students with the same socioeconomic profile.

In addition to GPA and college readiness program participation, Dell Scholars requirements also include graduation from an accredited high school, demonstrated financial need, and intent to enter a bachelor's degree program at an accredited higher education institution in the fall.

The Dell Scholars Program uses its custom-built software with a sophisticated algorithm that helps predict a student's propensity to graduate from college based on several factors, despite the personal challenges these determined, low-income students must address in their lives.

"What an honor for Sarafina. She is such a solid student and this scholarship will open the door to many opportunities," said Lee Principal Bruce Davis.

The daughter of Bridget Andrew, Sarafina moved to Baytown in 2009 from her native island of Grenada in the southeastern Caribbean Sea.

Sarafina is very thankful for her mother and her aunts, Carmen Parris and Alicia Williams, who have been supportive of her endeavors. "They have always been there for me when I am in need of support. They support my dreams and career plans, and keep me motivated," she said.

Her educational goals consist of enrolling at the University of Texas A&M at Corpus Christi because "the nursing program there is great."

After graduating, Sarafina says she plans on a career in nursing.

She wants to enter the nursing field because when she was young, her mother was sick a lot and she watched nurses take good care of her.

Sarafina said she hopes to return to Baytown after becoming a nurse, and also volunteer her time in Grenada during vacations.

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