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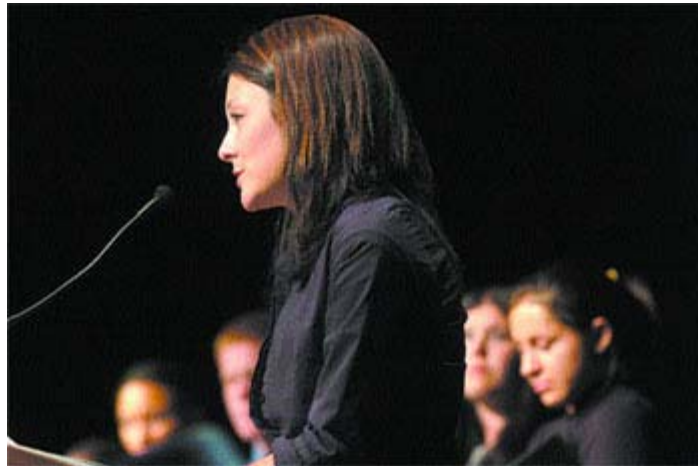
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Pay It Forward

Foundation awards \$5,500 in scholarships to 14 average students from endowment

By EMILY BERG/Staff Writer



James Quigg/Staff Photographer

Serrano High School scholarship winner Keona Fulcher reads her winning essay during the Sara's Hope Pay It Forward scholarship night Tuesday at Serrano High School in Phelan. Sara's Hope Foundation awarded 14 scholarships to winners selected from 41 applicants.

PHELAN — A local foundation gave away \$5,500 in scholarships Tuesday night and brought in an endowment to keep the giving going for future years.

Sara's Hope Foundation will continue to give money to help average students, thanks to a donation of \$25,000 from Frontier Homes to provide scholarship money, Kristina Nolan said.

"It's going to be a really exciting night," Nolan said before the awards were made. The foundation held its scholarship award ceremony at Serrano High School's Performing Arts Center.

The foundation gave out two first-place scholarships of \$1,000 each, four \$500 scholarships and eight \$250 scholarships to students from Silverado and Serrano high schools. The scholarships are based on an annual essay contest, not grades.

This year's theme was Pay It Forward. Students sent in essays about random acts of kindness they performed, Nolan said.

The top winner from Silverado High School was Valencia Rabanal, who struck up a two-hour conversation with a homeless man she saw frequently at a McDonald's restaurant, said Dan Tate, a founding member of Sara's Hope, and Nolan's brother.

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The top Serrano High School winner was Keona Fulcher, who offered a ride to school to a fellow student whom she'd never met before and thought was a little strange.

"I didn't do anything spectacular," Fulcher wrote in her essay. "I just did what I should have, what we all should do and what I hope someone will do for me some day."

This year's theme came from the 2000 film "Pay It Forward," starring Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Haley Joel Osment. Osment's character, a seventh-grade boy, decides to change the world by doing three kind acts, assuming those three people will then do something kind for someone else.

The foundation members wanted a theme that would inspire volunteerism and kindness, Tate said.

This is the second year the foundation has given out scholarships, Tate said.

The foundation hopes to include all the high schools in the area, and is adding a school a year to the program, Nolan said.

The foundation is named after Sara Rojas, a Serrano High School basketball player and Miss Teen Victorville 2001 who died in a traffic accident in December 2002.



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