
2017 ANNUAL REVIEW



ASCEND EDUCATIONAL FUND

Elevating Our Community Through Higher Education

AEF by the Numbers

3.30	Average GPA of 2017 scholars
2,300+	Applications opened online
\$100,000	Scholarship awards raised in 2017
11	2017 AEF Scholars
\$321,000	Scholarship awards raised in the last five years
44	AEF Scholars selected in the last five years
31	Colleges attended by AEF Scholars
25	Countries represented by AEF Scholars
\$26,000	Average household income of 2017 AEF applicants



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear AEF Friends & Supporters,

Immigrants across the nation faced enormous challenges in 2017. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was terminated on September 5, 2017. DACA allowed young people who came to the U.S through no choice of their own, the ability to work legally in the country and protected them from deportation. Even though the future of DACA students continues to be uncertain, we at AEF remain committed to enabling and encouraging higher education and professional achievement for the immigrant community. Regardless of ethnicity, national origin or immigration status, we envision every exceptional student in New York City as having the same educational and professional opportunities.

Thanks to your support, 2017 was our most successful year since our founding in 2012. In 2017, we received 350 applications and awarded \$100,000 (95% of funds raised), in college scholarships to eleven deserving immigrant students who represented countries like Indonesia, Mexico, Gambia, China and Nepal. Our Fourth Annual Gala was also a huge success and featured a menu from Food Network's Chef Ronaldo, and a comedy set from Cristela Alonzo.

Our proudest achievement continues to be our Scholars, who embody the diversity and perseverance of our immigrant community. Our 2017 AEF Scholars achieved an average GPA of 3.3 and were awarded a total of \$100,000, with an average award of over \$9,000. They are citizens and non-citizens, all New York City high school graduates, attending great colleges and universities across the country, and all of them are on their way to achieving their American dream.

I am excited to announce we received a grant in 2018 from *Educators for Fair Consideration* to create a strategic plan in order to take AEF to the next level, so we can serve even more students across New York City and one day across the nation.

As I reflect on our incredible fifth year, I could not have imagined we would come this far without your help. In particular, I want to recognize a few individuals who dedicated countless hours and resources to making 2017 a success: Adrienne Amin, Snehal Amin, Arthur Li, and our entire Gala Committee. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you for your support in helping us to "Elevate our Community through Higher Education."

Warmest Regards,

Julissa Arce, AEF Chairman of the Board

IN OUR FIFTH YEAR

We **selected eleven scholars**, our biggest class yet, who embody the diverse immigrant community in New York City and represent Bangladesh, China, Gambia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, and Togo.

We **awarded a total of \$100,000** (including \$15,350 from our “generosity by Indiegogo campaign”) – nearly 60% more than our prior year.

We were **selected for the "Invest in the Dream" grant** by *Educators for Fair Consideration*, which provided \$20,000 in matching funds for 2017 scholarships.

We **hosted our fourth annual gala**, with 220 people in attendance and raising over \$26,000 in proceeds.

We **celebrated our first graduating scholars** with four individuals graduating from Bryn Mawr College, City College of New York, Baruch College, and Penn State University.

OUR MISSION

TO ENABLE AND ENCOURAGE HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

1. We make a time and capital intensive commitment to our scholars: Our awards are between \$2,500 and \$20,000, and we enroll all Ascend Educational Fund Scholars in an intensive academic and professional Mentorship Program.
2. We serve all immigrant students regardless of national origin, ethnicity and immigration status: Most college scholarships limit their awards on the basis of ethnicity and immigration status. We target and serve all immigrants.

AEF SCHOLAR SELECTION PROCESS

AEF scholars were selected based on qualities traditionally valued and demonstrated by the immigrant community: hard work, resourcefulness, perseverance in the face of adversity, academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to one's community. All candidates submitted an application including two required essays: (1) Tell us how you plan to contribute to your community through your academic and career goals. If you feel that you have already contributed to your community, please tell us how as well.; and (2) Describe how your experience as an immigrant or a child of immigrants has affected your life and how it will contribute to your future success.

Over 2,300 applications were opened online, and we received 440 completed applications. Of the completed applications, 69% were by females and 31% were by males. Our Selection Committee, comprised of 35 volunteers, selected the top 19 candidates to interview in person (4% of applicants). Interviews were conducted in late May, and all finalists completed two interviews. While all were deserving of an AEF Scholarship, we selected eleven scholars representing Bangladesh, China, Gambia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, and Togo.

Our applicants represented all five boroughs of New York City: 26% Manhattan, 26% Queens, 25% Brooklyn, 18% Bronx, and 5% Staten Island.



MEET OUR 2017 AEF SCHOLARS



A young woman from **Gambia** who escaped child marriage and immigrated to New York at the age of 13. She is passionate about raising awareness about global sexual violence and has raised funds for organizations that relocate girls from dangerous and unstable communities. Her participation in the Barnard College STEP Program and the MedDocs Program have inspired her to study medicine and women's studies. Despite her hardship and arriving just four years ago, she is ranked at the top of her senior class and attends **Barnard College**.

The enthusiastic energy from our 2017 scholar from **Togo** is infectious. Her first encounter with English was at customs when she landed at JFK, and yet she speaks English with great fluency in the three years

she's been in the US. Despite the many hardships and violence she faced in her home country and the US, she is a rising pre-med student attending **Skidmore College**. Her goal to become a doctor stems from the lack of medical assistance her family received in her country. This **Amin Family Educational Scholar** dreams of one day going back to build a stronger medical infrastructure in her community.

This scholar's path through life has been enormously difficult: her path from **Mexico** to the US, family home incidents, and the death of a close friend. She managed all of these stresses and a part time job where she worked 23 hours a week while attending high school full time. Therapy and counseling were the driving force of her ability to cope and stay on task. This **Sofia**

India Amin Educational Scholar is inspired to provide the same help she was given by majoring in Psychology and Counseling and attends **Queensborough Community College**.

A young woman from **Nepal** who immigrated to the United States six years ago. The last two years she has interned as a youth activist with the New York Civil Liberties Union and since then donates half of her check to fund a year's worth of school supplies for disadvantaged children in Nepal. When she was bullied because of her accent, she sought out alliances with the LGBTQ community and helped raise awareness on acceptance and inclusion. She is proud to serve as a mentor to her younger sister, and has learned to overcome her own challenges with hard work and building confidence. This **Sanchez Alzate Community Scholar** attends **Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute** and plans to study business management or computer science.

A young woman from **Bangladesh** who immigrated to New York as a young child. In middle school faced with a lack of resources available to navigate the competitive educational system, she founded her own non-profit to provide resources to underserved low-income students, including tools for high school admissions, SAT prep and a network of mentors with similar backgrounds. She is active in organizing protests against anti-Islamic rhetoric and violence, and she thrived in a career development program, The Opportunity Network. Her family has also faced hardship with her father

becoming physically disabled and her mother suffering from spinal injuries. She is passionate about dance and attends **Barnard College**, focusing on entrepreneurship and economics.

A young man who emigrated from **Mexico** at the age of six and has always loved physics and math. He earned an engineering internship with Con Edison which allowed him to gain experience working on New York City's electrical distribution system and a project focused on building stronger electrical equipment post Hurricane Sandy. He dreams of being in a position to influence and be part of technological change in order to improve the lives of people everywhere and also inspire more Latino students to pursue a STEM education. This **Raj and Bhavini Amin Educational Scholar** plans to pursue a degree in electrical engineering or applied physics at **New York University**.

For this scholar originally from **China**, her pursuit of the American Dream began only three years ago when she and her mother were forced to seek political asylum in the U.S. In that short time, she has endured two high schools across two different states, while also learning a new language and applying to colleges. Dedicated, resilient, and passionate about accounting, she hopes to one day have her own firm to provide financial literacy and accounting to immigrants and those without traditional access to such resources. This **Momentum Realty Acquisition Scholar** plans to study accounting and has enrolled at **Stony Brook University**.

A **Guatemalan** immigrant with a passion for food, who worked part-time in restaurants to help her family while attending high school and maintaining her high GPA. She is one step closer to her dream as an occupational therapist after getting accepted to the **College of Mount Saint Vincent**. She sought help and didn't receive it from teachers who were neglectful of students at her under-resourced high school, so she looked to the internet and the library to help teach herself and others. What is our **2017 Ronaldo Linares Perseverance Award Scholar** most proud of? Helping tutor another fellow immigrant student achieve good grades in math.

This 2017 scholar moved to the country at 15 years old from **Bangladesh**; she arrived merely two days before her first day at high school and was initially teased and made fun of. Through sheer will, she learned English and ascended to become student Vice President her senior year. Her first initiative as student body Vice President? Create a buddy program to help newcomers to the US to better adjust to their new environment. Her love of math and science has led her to declare her major in civil engineering at **City College of New York**.

A young woman from **Mexico**, this scholar came to the U.S. as a small child and has overcome many challenges as an immigrant. She has dedicated herself to assisting her community via workshops that help promote financial management, civic engagement, leadership development, and higher education for immigrants. She is a

Sponsors for Educational Opportunity scholar who was selected for a summer program with Franklin & Marshall College. With her bubbly personality and outgoing attitude, she pursues her passions, which include acting, karate, and cross-country running. This **Cristela Alonzo Resilience Award Scholar** plans to pursue a career as a doctor and has enrolled at **Binghamton University**.

Born in **Indonesia** and immigrated to the U.S. as a 2 year old, this scholar would come to call Queens his home. After gaining admission to the competitive Stuyvesant High School, he did nothing but excel in and outside the classroom, including serving as an active member of the peer mentorship and guidance program. With near perfect SAT scores and a rigorous course load, he still found time to become the president of his school's dance team where his love for hip hop and dance showcases flourished. As an immigrant, he has accepted the numerous challenges and doesn't stop pursuing the activities that make him happy. This scholar is passionate about pursuing a career as a teacher and has enrolled at **Stony Brook University**.

FIFTH ANNUAL MENTOR PICNIC

We hosted our fifth annual Mentorship Picnic on Saturday, July 15 at WeWork Chelsea. 2017 Scholars met their mentors for the first time, and networked with both the scholars and mentors from our prior four years, in addition to select AEF volunteers. Approximately 30 people were in attendance. The highlight of the afternoon was a panel discussion with the 2014 - 2016 Scholars and hosted by a graduating 2013 Scholar on best advice, lessons learned, resources available, and other personal insights on the transition to college.



THIRD ANNUAL CAREER READINESS WORKSHOP

AEF hosted its third annual Career Readiness Workshop in partnership with the Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks program on August 2. The event gave 15 of our AEF Scholars an opportunity to learn about resume writing, personal brand development, and interview preparation, in addition to participating in three rounds of mock interviews with nine Goldman Sachs professionals. AEF scholars crafted elevator pitches and brought copies of their resumes to engage with the volunteers in order to make actionable updates. The workshop also featured Goldman Sachs professionals on a panel discussing career readiness, mentorship, and community involvement.



AEF'S FOURTH ANNUAL GALA

We hosted our Fourth Annual Gala, "Shaping America's Future", on Saturday, March 4 at WeWork's The Lounge in Soho. We had 220 supporters in attendance, our most attended gala to date! We raised over \$9,000 from our silent auction alone with net proceeds of over \$26,000 for scholarship awards.

One of our 2016 AEF Scholars, Sharon, and one of our inaugural 2013 AEF Scholars, Cinthia, shared their personal stories and paths to success driven by resilience, hard work, and perseverance. Both scholars attend CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice.



Guests enjoyed cultural bites from Chef Ronaldo Linares and desserts from Nathan Lone and pastry chef Natasha Guerrero. The evening was highlighted by performances from the Darrah Carr Dance Group and Baila Society, in addition to a hilarious comedy set by Cristela Alonzo. We would like to send a special thank you to our gala sponsors, Marchburn Design, Tito's Handmade Vodka, and Momentum Realty Acquisitions, in addition to Marc Hall Photography, our six honorary Gala co-chairs and 16 Gala Planning Committee members.



SPRING CAMPAIGN WITH GENEROSITY BY INDIEGOGO

We launched AEF's Fourth Annual Spring Campaign on April 25, 2017 with "generosity by Indiegogo" and hosted a Spring kick off event at Campeon in Union Square. Over 20 supporters joined us for an evening of networking and to spread the word of the generosity campaign in our final push for funds for our 2017 scholars. Through the generosity by Indiegogo campaign, we successfully raised \$15,350 in one month, beating our goal of \$10,000.

AEF ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Council for AEF consists of thoughtful leaders who are instrumental in ensuring the longevity of our organization by providing advice and guidance to the Board of Directors.

ADRIENNE & SNEHAL AMIN

AEF SUPPORTER CIRCLE

The AEF Supporter Circle are recognized as supporters who contribute at least \$5,000 to our scholarship funds.

ADRIENNE & SNEHAL AMIN

CELESTE & EDISON CASTANEDA

DON GRAHAM

FRIENDS OF AEF

Friends of AEF are recognized as supporters who contribute at least \$1,000 to our scholarship funds.

NIRA DESAI

ARTHUR LI

BONNIE MASLIN

MOMENTUM REALTY

Learn more about how you can support AEF at www.ascendfundny.org

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