



# NEWS

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## **THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF COOK COUNTY ANNOUNCES FIRST SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS**

### ***Prairie State College & One Million Degrees Partner with Housing Authority for Student Success***

**COOK COUNTY** –The Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC) announced that 9 disadvantaged students who reside at HACC properties or receive housing vouchers will receive financial scholarships under the HACC Scholar’s Promise.

The first scholarship award of its kind for the Housing Authority of Cook County, the HACC Scholar’s Promise is dedicated to improving the quality of life for young adults. Student residents who met eligibility criteria will be assigned long-term personalized coaching, tutoring, financial assistance, academic advising, personal supports, and career readiness skills. Ultimately, the students will complete the program and earn a college degree to launch them into promising careers.

Nine young adults were selected from suburban areas across Cook County under a competitive process that included submission of essays, transcripts, test scores, and community service. They will enroll at Prairie State College this week.



(L-R, Deb Havighorst, ED Prairie State Foundation, Michael Leonard HACC Scholar, Dr. Terri Winfree, Pres Prairie State College)

## Add One/ HACC Scholars

“These extraordinary young men and women have met the challenge to beat the odds and barriers to college access, said Richard Monocchio, HACC Executive Director. We are going to do everything that we can to help them navigate through any challenges so that they can achieve the academic success to guide them to self-sufficiency and prosperity,” he added.

Dr. Terri Winfree, President of Prairie State College and Deborah Smith Havighorst, Executive Director of the Prairie State Foundation greeted some of the HACC Scholars, including Michael Leonard of Chicago Heights, a HACC Scholar recipient.

Each scholarship package is valued up to \$5,000 which also includes the support network, career coaching and tutoring framework provided by One Million Degrees and Prairie State College.

“The disturbing gap of poverty and inadequate housing on a young person’s educational outcome and their future success is undeniable - which is why we need to provide extra supports and resources so that they have a fighting chance to achieve academic excellence,” Monocchio stressed.

2016 HACC Scholars include: Vatsana Hargrove, Benitez Bryant, Priscella May, Kayla Grayer, Daijah Sawyer, Michael Leonard, Steven Palmer, Shaquille Drake, and Darius Jackson. A celebratory luncheon is also being planned to honor the scholars, parents, grandparents and program participants.

Vatsana Hargrove, an 18 year old HACC resident in Homewood graduated from Flossmoor High School. Vatsana, is interested in pursuing studies in childhood development.

"This has been a tedious process, but worth the anxiety and hard work. I am extremely grateful and appreciative that the Housing Authority of Cook County cares about the future of young people and education. I feel good about myself and my chances succeeding in life since so that I can help children overcome their disabilities," she said.

Michael Leonard, 18 from Chicago Heights, graduated from Rich Township High East Campus and wants to study computer science. Michael said that he wants to open a gateway of success for the rest of his family.

“This opportunity is so important for me because I know how hard it was for my mother to raise three kids sacrificing her own dreams. It’s not just about me, it’s about helping my family and the community to make a better way of life,” he said.

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Add Two/  
HACC Scholars

The scholarship grants can be used by recipients to pay tuition costs at Prairie State College.

HACC Scholar's Promise partners, Dr. Terri Winfree, President of Prairie State College, and Paige Ponder, Chief Executive Officer of One Million Degrees also applauded the efforts of the incoming freshmen students and pledged support and resources to ensure their successful outcomes.

Complementing Prairie State's academic resources, One Million Degrees will work with the college and housing communities to provide on-going support for students to receive their associate's degrees, transfer to four-year institutions, and launch upwardly mobile professional careers.

One Million Degrees is the only organization in Illinois – and one of few in the country – exclusively committed to serving and graduating community college students. Students in the program receive academic, personal, professional, and financial supports to succeed in school, work, and life. In the 2016 – 2017 academic year, OMD will serve 700 community college scholars across Illinois.

The HACC Scholar's Promise is a true partnership between government, education, corporate and philanthropic agencies collaborating to achieve student success. For more information, please visit: [www.thehacc.org](http://www.thehacc.org); [www.facebook.com/theHACC](https://www.facebook.com/theHACC); [www.twitter.com/theHACCtweets](https://www.twitter.com/theHACCtweets); [www.onemilliondegrees.org](http://www.onemilliondegrees.org)

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