

# 2006 Thoele Scholarship Recipients Named

Each year, the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) awards scholarships to 20 students as part of the Charles E. Thoele Scholarship Program. Recipients receive \$1,000 each to be used toward educational expenses at undergraduate or vocational-technical schools during the coming school year.

The Charles E. Thoele Scholarship Program was established by Mercy in 1993 to honor Thoele, a retired Mercy executive and board member. The program awards 18 scholarships to dependents of Mercy co-workers. Two additional scholarships are awarded each year to students from Sisters of Mercy-sponsored high schools.

Thoele, well-known for being dedicated to the advancement and personal growth of young people, serves as a member of the seven-person scholarship selection committee. Other members of the committee include religious sisters, executives from Mercy's Strategic Service Units and Mercy co-workers.

"I have always believed in the value of education," Thoele said. "It provides a strong foundation on which young people can build their careers. Providing scholarships for children of Mercy co-workers is one small way we can help them. This is not only important for the students, it is important for all of us because these young adults are our link to the future."

The scholarship selection process begins in April of each year with the committee members reviewing applications of approximately 40 finalists selected from the pool of entries by Scholarship America, a scholarship management organization. Each finalist's application is reviewed individually by each committee member, who assigns the application a rank based on the student's academic achievement and personal character, as demonstrated by participating in school and community activities, work experience, leadership qualities, awards and honors, goal setting, and personal and school references. Any special circumstances of need are also taken into consideration.

"Serving on the committee gives me an opportunity to directly live the Mercy spirit by reviewing applications of bright, committed young people," said Michael Zilm, president of St. John's Mercy Hospital in Washington, Missouri. "I especially like that the selection process addresses spiritual aspects of life such as community service, because we could miss committed young people if we just look at their academic achievements."

Once all the committee members have submitted their rankings, the full committee meets via teleconference to select the recipients and two alternates. Alternates are awarded scholarships only if a recipient declines the scholarship offer. Recipients are notified by mid-May of each year.

The 2006 Thoele Scholarship recipients were selected

## ISSA ARREDONDO

Daughter of Issa Arredondo  
Registered Nurse  
Mercy Ministries of Laredo  
College: University of Texas  
Major: Nursing



## LAURA BUCK

Daughter of Donald Buck  
Manager, Finance  
St. John's Mercy Health Care,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: University of Missouri-  
Columbia  
Major: Biochemistry

## ROBERT CAVIN

Son of Tracey Cavin  
Preschool Teacher, Child  
Development Center  
St. John's Health System,  
Springfield, MO  
College: Ozarks Technical  
Community College  
Major: EMT Training



## NICOLE FREEMAN

Daughter of Debra Freeman  
PCP/CNA  
St. Joseph's Mercy Health Center,  
Hot Springs, AR  
College: National Park Community  
College  
Major: Physical Therapy



## LESLIE KIBBLE

Daughter of Kathy Clark  
Receptionist, Health for Life  
Mercy Health Center, Fort Scott, KS  
College: Labette Community  
College  
Major: Radiology



## JEFFREY KURZ

Son of Karen Kurz  
Registered Nurse, Women's Health  
St. John's Mercy Medical Center,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: Truman State University  
Major: Biology

## ALYSSA MALONE

Daughter of Brenton Malone  
Medical Technologist  
Mercy Health Center, Fort Scott, KS  
College: Fort Scott Community  
College  
Major: Elementary/Early Childhood Education



## LAUREN NAGLE

Daughter of Barbara Nagle  
Medical Secretary, Maternal &  
Fetal Medicine  
St. John's Health System,  
Springfield, MO  
College: Missouri State University  
Major: Undecided



## MARY POMERANKE

Daughter of Susan Pomeranke  
Physical Therapist  
St. John's Health System,  
Springfield, MO  
College: Xavier University  
Major: Nursing

## LORI REED

Daughter of Karla Reed  
Senior Buyer, Purchasing  
St. John's Health System,  
Springfield, MO  
College: Ozark Technical  
Community College  
Major: Psychology



## SARA SANDS

Daughter of Mark Sands  
Director of Psychiatry  
St. John's Mercy Health Care,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: University of Michigan  
Major: Political Science



## ZACHARY SCHULZ

Son of Laura Schulz  
Staff Nurse  
St. John's Mercy Medical Center,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: St. Charles Community  
College  
Major: Health Information



## TAYLOR SCHWEKE

Daughter of Linda Schweke  
Registered Nurse  
St. John's Health System,  
Springfield, MO  
College: Drury University  
Major: Biochemistry

## JENA SWINGLE

Daughter of Maureen Swingle  
Nurse Manager  
St. John's Mercy Medical Center,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: University of Missouri -  
Columbia  
Major: Biological Science - Pre-Med



## ERIN THESS

Daughter of Kim Bryant  
Senior Account Manager, Sales  
Department  
Mercy Health Plans, St. Louis, MO  
College: William Jewell College  
Major: Communications

## AMY WARREN

Daughter of Kathleen Warren  
Registered Nurse  
Mercy Health System of Northwest  
Arkansas  
College: University of Arkansas at  
Fayetteville  
Major: Nursing



## CAITLIN WEINDEL

Daughter of Linda Weindel  
Senior Consultant-Clinical  
Integration  
Sisters of Mercy Health System,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: University of Missouri-  
Columbia  
Major: Physical Therapy



## JINYU ZHANG

Daughter of Juliang Fu  
Medical Technologist  
St. John's Mercy Medical Center,  
St. Louis, MO  
College: Stanford University  
Major: Pre-Med



## SISTERS OF MERCY-SPONSORED HIGH SCHOOL RECIPIENTS:



**ANDREA NEHUS**  
Mount St. Mary Academy  
Little Rock, AR  
College: University of Oklahoma  
Major: Nursing



**EMILY MUSSATTO**  
Mount St. Mary High School  
Oklahoma City, OK  
College: University of Arkansas  
Major: Nursing



## SISTERS OF MERCY PROFILE

### Sr. Maria Luisa Vera, RSM

Sister Maria Luisa Vera, RSM, was 21 years old when she met the woman who would shape her life and become her mentor, Sister Alvera Simon, RSM. The year was 1962 and Sr. Maria Luisa was working in her first job as a licensed vocational nurse in the emergency room at Mercy Hospital in Brownsville, Texas. Sr. Alvera was the surgery and emergency room supervisor. "Sister Alvera taught me that leadership means challenging people to be their best, helping them to grow and actualize their potential. When I would tell her I needed help, she would always come to my side without question and show me what to do," she recalled. "She once told me that she knew her help would not have been



Sr. Maria Luisa Vera, RSM

requested if it wasn't needed. She was my ideal supervisor and the guiding force of my youth."

Sr. Alvera's example also influenced Sr. Maria Luisa's decision to enter religious life. In 1963, after having worked with Sr. Alvera for only one year, Sr. Maria Luisa entered the Sisters of Mercy. Three years later she took her first vows and was assigned to Mercy Hospital in Fort Scott, Kansas, where she received her registered nurse's license from Mercy School of Nursing in 1970. She then returned to Mercy Hospital in her hometown of Brownsville where she worked for three years before moving to San Antonio to pursue her bachelor's degree in nursing from Incarnate Word College. After graduating, she accepted the position of director of in-service education at Mercy Hospital in Laredo, Texas. It was there, in 1978, 16 years after she met Sr. Alvera, that Sr. Maria Luisa found herself working in the same position her mentor had held, emergency room supervisor. It was now her turn to be a leader.

In 1980, Sr. Maria Luisa began formal leadership training in Denver, Colorado, as part of a ministry training services program. Five years later she was elected to her first religious leadership position as a member of the St. Louis Province Leadership Team, where she served for 10 years. In 1992, she became president of the Sisters of Mercy St. Louis Regional Community. Three years later, she was elected to the leadership team of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the

Americas in Silver Spring, Maryland. She remained with the Institute for 10 years, until taking a sabbatical in 2005.

The past year has been one of renewal, reassessment and re-visioning, according to Sr. Maria Luisa. During her sabbatical, she moved back to Laredo. Having served on the board of Mercy Ministries of Laredo since its creation in 2003, Sr. Maria Luisa began working informally in the community - acting as a visible sign of the continued presence of the Sisters of Mercy in their midst. When Danny Guevara, chief executive officer for Mercy Ministries of Laredo, announced his impending retirement, Sr. Maria Luisa was asked to take the position. She agreed and will become CEO of Mercy Ministries of Laredo on August 1. Her goal, quite simply, is "to continue to bring Mercy to others."

Not long after this life-changing decision, Sr. Maria Luisa went on a trip to Ghana, Africa, to visit Sister Elizabeth Burns, RSM, who assists the poor in finding resources to address their needs and is helping to build a new fistula hospital for young African women. There she found the inspiration to carry her through the challenges that inevitably accompany a new job and into her new mission of service in Laredo.

"The message that kept coming back to me during the trip was that when you really want to do something, you find a way," Sr. Maria Luisa said. "Sister Elizabeth is my

inspiration. She is almost 20 years my senior and she is still going at full force."

As Sr. Maria Luisa embarks upon the new experience of being a CEO, the memory of Sr. Alvera remains strong. "I never thought about it consciously until now, but the example she showed me has become my style of leadership - to trust people and to believe that they can and will do their best, while finding ways to let them know that I am here if they need me," she said. "I hope that the people of Laredo will see that I and the other Sisters of Mercy are here for them, continuing our tradition of service." •

## TOP 10 "FUN FACTS"

- Favorite color:** "Mercy" blue
- Favorite season:** Summer
- Favorite book:** *The Kite Runner* or *The Bookseller of Kabul*
- Favorite hobbies:** Sewing, also painting mono-prints in primary colors
- Favorite role model:** Sister Alvera Simon, RSM
- Favorite beverage:** A good glass of wine
- Favorite flower:** Calla lily, for its sheer beauty and simplicity
- Favorite TV show:** *The West Wing*
- Favorite holiday:** Easter
- What talent would you most like to have:** Being able to sing. As a child I used to think that not being able to sing would prevent me from becoming a sister.