

# 2011

# every student succeeding

## a salute to public education success stories

Many students face tremendous obstacles in their lives, but through dedication, hard work and the support of caring educators, these students have learned to overcome life's hardships.

These inspiring students know about struggling and striving, about trying to fit in and feeling left out. They know about shame and anger and making mistakes. But they also know about hope and trust and second chances.

They know another untold story. It's about today's public schools and the people who make them work — dedicated professionals who help students deal with their fears and frustrations; educators who reach out to them, so they can reach higher than they ever thought possible to achieve success in school and in life.

ACSA salutes these student champions and the outstanding educators who keep the promise of a better future within every student's reach.

### Region 1

## Shayla Petit

Shayla Petit's amazing work ethic will take her far in life. Since second grade in Freshwater School District, the Resource Specialist Program and Title 1 support Shayla received have helped her shine despite struggles with reading and writing. She plans ahead and devotes extra time to complete multiple drafts of her work, and can now produce very polished essays.



Shayla thrives under the emotional safety at the smaller Six Rivers High, where she enjoys the nurturing support of school leaders, teachers and staff. She has benefited from program modifications and is not afraid to seek knowledge from others. Last year, as a ninth-grader, she managed to get almost straight A's.

In addition, she has shown a remarkable poise and capacity to manage even the toughest situations, including the death of her mother in the summer of 2010. Her ability to advocate for herself and take the initiative at school has helped her rise above circumstances to become an excellent partner in her own learning.

ACSA is proud to honor Shayla Petit and her Region 1 educational support team.

A former gang member himself, Diego has not only become a school leader and good student, he has greatly assisted with his family and his mother, who was paralyzed in a car accident seven years ago. Rather than sinking into a world of bleak prospects, Diego has become a promising young man and a leader of tomorrow. ACSA is proud of Diego Valdivia and his Region 2 support team.

### Region 3

## Jahari Kirkendoll

When Jahari Kirkendoll came to Sutterville Elementary School in third grade, it was immediately apparent his charisma, charm and spirit would take him far. He was an inspiration to school staff as they worked to provide care and the best possible education.

Responding to that attention, Jahari has thrived. He enjoys the pride and joy that come from learning. Despite uncertain circumstances that have included living at the Sacramento Children's Home, he has learned to apply himself academically and actively seeks out solutions to problems. He has also been motivated by his mother's courage



as she enrolled in college to pursue new career goals. Jahari has found a place on the football team, which allows him to focus his physicality in positive ways. School has become a safe place where he can grow. Principal Lori Aoun says she knows she can count on Jahari to be a leader and a positive role model for other students.

ACSA salutes Jahari Kirkendoll and his continued efforts to make those around him proud.

### Region 4

## Katherine Manning

Katherine Manning's sociable personality made it easy for staff at Willits High School to support her. Kat is an exceptionally mature young woman who stayed highly involved in school activities and empathetic to her classmates.

She served as a peer counselor, participated in swim team and art activities, and worked part-time to save money for college, all while maintaining a high GPA. In fact, Kat graduated this year with almost a full year of college completed.

Throughout years of struggle, Kat has learned that



persistent effort, a positive attitude and kindness toward others result in triumph. Rather than play it safe, Kat challenges herself to the point where her limits are tested. Watching Kat's tenacity in action was inspiring to school staff.

No matter how long the journey or how many setbacks, she simply grits her teeth and never gives up. ACSA commends Katherine Manning's work

ethic, superior coping skills and resiliency.

### Region 5

## Eduardo Deras

Eduardo Deras is a young man whose determination gives him the strength to overcome any challenge. By setting his mind to it, he worked hard to earn the credits he needed to graduate from Community School Central in San Mateo County.

With the support of school staff, Eduardo has received the academic foundation and life skills he needs to succeed. He also found success in his work with the community. He is involved in the Boys and Girls Club, where he works as the bilingual front desk assistant, and helps feed needy families during the holidays.



He has also found an outlet for his passion for music through the Adobe Foundation and the Black Eyed Peas' Peapod Academy, where he produces music and videos. He co-produced the video "Stand Up For Haiti," to send a message of hope following that country's devastating earthquake.

ACSA is proud to honor Eduardo Deras and his Region 5 support team.

### Region 2

## Diego Valdivia

Diego Valdivia is a young man destined for success. At the beginning of his junior year of high school, Diego stepped back, looked deep inside and told himself he could do better. He got involved with the Colusa High School soccer team and caught the eye of Activity Director Bobby Kirkman, who recognized Diego's emerging leadership skills.



Diego was recruited to become part of the school's Leadership Class, facilitating student

activities, being a leader on the soccer team, and encouraging students to stay away from gangs. His 3.0 GPA is testament to his perseverance and the good choices he's made in life.

## Region 6

## Nancy Nguyen

With the help of her school community at California High School in San Ramon, Nancy Nguyen has found the inner strength and courage to succeed academically and socially.

Now in her senior year, Nancy experienced horrific tragedy as a grade-schooler when she lost her mother

to murder and her father was convicted of the crime. Nancy and her two sisters lived with relatives until economic circumstances split them up, and Nancy found herself without a home in the 10th grade.

But Cal High faculty stepped up and quickly devoted the extra time to ensure Nancy got back on track. A school counselor serves as her guardian, and teachers have worked very hard to provide the necessary academic accommodations to help Nancy succeed.

She now has a great GPA and is positively involved in school activities. She takes life one day at a time, with her head held high. ACSA is proud of Nancy Nguyen and her Region 6 support team.



and speak English using an alternative communication device, resulting in her growing and learning even more.

The fact that Chi has tested proficient in both math and language arts is a testament to her hard work. Chi represents what is possible when the district, school, parents and student come together with the singular purpose of the best possible education. ACSA salutes Chi Diem Hang and her Region 8 support team.



## Region 11

## Tiffany Jeanes

Tiffany Jeanes is on the fast track to success in life. This young woman has become a high achieving student with top-notch leadership skills. She blossomed once she entered Strathmore High School in Porterville. With the support system in place there, she did well in honors English during her sophomore year and took AP English in her junior year.

This is remarkable considering she had never before found school easy. Due to family difficulties she entered foster care when she was 10 years old. But when she finally came to a home in Strathmore she was offered a stable environment and began to flourish.

At Strathmore High, Tiffany was ranked in the top five of her senior class. She

represented the school at the Camp Royal Leadership Conference and also started the Brave Heart Women's Club to assist young women with self-esteem, goal setting and problem solving skills.

She plans to attend the University of California, Santa Barbara and hopes to one day become a criminal profiler. ACSA is pleased to honor Tiffany Jeanes and her Region 11 support team.



## Region 9

## Patricia Rodriguez

Patricia Rodriguez is proof that with a positive attitude, anything is possible. She consciously decided to overcome the anger that was holding her back and play an active role in her own success. She is now well on her way to achieving her goals of attending college and becoming a psychologist.

With help from staff at Kerman High School, Patty earned high grades and regained credits she needed to graduate. She eagerly participated in the school's counseling and a tutoring program through California State University, Fresno, and attended summer and Saturday school. She also took several classes



at the adult school, due to responsibilities at home. She spent most of her breaks and lunch in the counseling office seeking further knowledge.

Patty's achievement improved day by day. By her senior year she was earning all A's and B's and was active in school clubs. She also took and passed both sections of the California High School Exit Exam. ACSA is proud of Patricia Rodriguez and the Region 9 team that supported her.

## Region 10

## Samantha Gruys

The Resource Support Program at Cypress Charter High School has helped Samantha Gruys clarify her understanding of what it takes to tackle life's bigger issues. Supported by school staff and her grandmother, and possessing remarkable resilience and perseverance, Sam will attend Cabrillo College in the fall.

Cypress founding Principal Les Forster takes pride in Sam's growth over her four years at the school. Despite challenges that include the death of her father in her sophomore year, Sam is successfully maneuvering the maze of academic, social and life changes with a strong outlook and tempered spirit.

She has worked through an impressive array of assignments and special projects in all core subjects and even passed the California High School Exit Exam on her first attempt. Samantha Gruys stands tall in her future pursuits, and ACSA salutes her and the Region 10 educational support team that helped her along the way.



## Region 7

## Steufon Mackey

Steufon Mackey recently graduated from Weston Ranch High in Manteca USD. His outstanding attitude, great heart and tenacity have helped him come a long way in the past couple of years.



In March 2009, he was hit by a stray bullet that remains lodged in his head; although doctors say it is located in a non-lethal spot. The initial

prognosis was grim, but Steufon's family refused to give up on him. They found a neurosurgeon who ensured Steufon would make it. Throughout serious surgeries, a permanent shunt in his brain, and a grueling rehab process to relearn how to walk, talk, read, write, eat and regain his memory, Steufon has amazed everyone with his perseverance.

He still struggles a little with his speech, but his mind is sharp. An honors student before the shooting, he made up his Advanced Placement coursework and continues on a track toward college and a goal of someday owning his own line of clothing and retail stores. ACSA is honored to recognize Steufon Mackey and his Region 7 support team.

## Region 8

## Chi Diem Hang

Chi Diem Hang came to Willow Glen Middle School as a sixth grader with infectious enthusiasm, an insatiable desire to learn and a can-do attitude. This was despite the fact that she had no formal schooling in her home country of Vietnam, no use of her arms or hands, and was mostly non-verbal.

But it was clear to school staff that Chi was quite a phenomenon. She retained everything she learned, and would often go beyond what was expected from a lesson. When the school discovered gaps in her education, staff developed an educational plan that allowed her to experience school sequentially and ultimately succeed. Chi learned to understand

## Region 12

## De Antonio Harris

Basketball was the hook that caught De Antonio Harris' interest at San Bernardino High School. To play on the team, he needed good grades. That opened him up to the help offered by his coach and other school staff. He has since achieved a 4.0 GPA, up from a 2.3 his freshman year.

De Antonio says he cherishes this accomplishment, and the good grades he continues to earn, because he has had to overcome so many obstacles. He admits to making some bad choices and suffering the consequences, and appreciates the positive influences the school presented him.

Now, instead of fighting, De Antonio uses basketball as an outlet for his anger. Even after graduating in June, he is always willing to help others and listens to those offering him help. Hard work and having the right people in his life has paid off, he says. He is now on a path that will lead him to college and eventually law school. ACSA is proud of De Antonio Harris and his Region 12 support team.



## Region 13

## Hailee Lawheed

Even at her young age, Hailee Lawheed has an adult-like resolve and strength. She embodies resiliency, integrity and intelligence, and is known as a champion who can do it, no matter what "it" is. Despite a troubled family life early in childhood, Hailee keeps a positive attitude and always has a smile on her face.



She is determined and self-motivated, while relying on her support team at E.O. Green Junior High in Oxnard.

She is active in the after-

school program, a component of Green's Response to Intervention initiative. Hailee works hard to obtain the advanced level in mathematics and highly proficient in English language arts. To reach these goals, she stays after school daily for tutoring.

She is actively involved in extracurricular activities, such as the school volleyball team, junior lifeguard program, fundraising and new student orientation. She is admired by fellow students and teachers alike for her eagerness to help others and her refusal to be a victim. ACSA is proud to honor Hailee Lawheed and the Region 13 support team that helped her along the way.

## Region 14

## Yunhee Choi

Yunhee Choi graduated this year from Bellflower High School as a happy, tenacious, popular student. She plans to attend Cerritos College and eventually transfer to a four-year university to pursue a career in writing. What makes this former homecoming queen so special is that she was born with cerebral palsy. She gets around with the assistance of a power chair and speaks through computer assistance.



Yunhee emigrated from Korea as a child with her family. By the age of 7 she was placed in a group home, where she was the only resident who was not severely developmentally delayed.

Her Bellflower peers learned to look beyond her physical impairments and get to know her sharp intellect and keen sense of humor. Throughout her life, Yunhee has advocated for independence and her civil right to be treated as an equal in society. She has inspired her fellow students to become more accepting, more tolerant and more aware.

ACSA is proud to honor Yunhee Choi and her Region 14 support team.

## Region 15

## Carla Vance

Carla Vance is one of those high achieving students who delights educators. Faculty at Ganesha High in Pomona uniformly remark on Carla's outstanding work ethic in her AP classes, always arriving prepared to engage in lessons. But Carla has had to deal with more challenges than the average student.

Her father passed away before she was born, and her mother has been in and out of hospitals her entire life. Living with a maternal uncle offered a place to call home. But in 2010 Carla developed a lump on her neck. When a teacher suggested she have it looked at, Carla was diagnosed with Hodgkin's

Lymphoma. She was moved to a foster home during treatments.

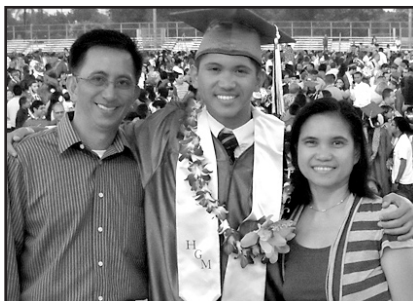
She entered a Home and Hospital Program so she could keep current in her classes. But she longed to return to school and ultimately made it back during her senior year. She has maintained a positive attitude and applied to Cal Poly Pomona. Even though she is still dealing with cancer and chemo, she has high hopes for the future. ACSA salutes Carla Vance and her Region 15 support team.



## Region 16

## Darrel Justo

Motivation and a commitment to excellence drove Darrel Justo to the top of his class at North Hollywood Highly Gifted Magnet School. He is a diligent and conscientious student, who friends say encourages others to do their best when they are in his presence.



That strength of character

was evident at an early age. When Darrel was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia at 8 years old, he worked to beat the cancer in three years. Throughout the pain of treatment and side effects of chemotherapy, he managed to stay engaged in school, and even surpassed classmates, staying consistently on the honor roll.

When he entered the Highly Gifted Magnet at North Hollywood High School, where an IQ of 145-plus is required, he rose to the challenge and the top 10 percent of his senior class. In addition, he is an avid runner, pianist and volunteer in the community. ACSA is proud to honor Darrel Justo and his Region 16 support team.

## Region 17

## Jacob Wayne

Jacob Wayne has played baseball, topped the honor roll and served on student council at Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School in Saddleback Valley USD. Nothing out of the ordinary for a student with goals, until you take into consideration he is a cancer survivor. At the end of his seventh grade year, Jacob was diagnosed with a blood cancer that affects the nerves and vital organs.

Over the past year Jacob has been in and out of the hospital, through surgery and five phases of chemotherapy. Because schools can harbor germs, he must study at home. While most students in this situation would distract themselves with videogames or TV, Jacob not only keeps up with his honors-level curriculum, he has also created a video blog that chronicles his life.



His teachers and school leaders help Jacob keep up and stay fully engaged in the rigorous curriculum, noting how he faces cancer with poise, resiliency and optimism. When Jacob's Region 17 support team thinks of Every Student Succeeding, they think of him.

## Region 18

## Sara Klapka

Sara Klapka is a student who has shown one size does not fit all when it comes to academics. A bright, creative and talented artist, her personal resolve allowed her to catch up on missed credits and graduate from Abraxas High School in Poway USD in September 2010.

Sara suffered from an anxiety disorder that kept her from attending school. Eventually she returned, but had trouble focusing on her work. But with a flexible schedule, she soon began to blossom. She transitioned from part-time on campus to full-time. She spent her free time at a local horse stable, where she rode and cared for the animals. This served as a healing process and allowed her to relax.

When she was very close to completing the classes she needed for graduation, she kicked it into high gear. She had good attendance and got solid grades, soon earning the credits she needed to graduate.

ACSA is proud of Sara Klapka and the Region 18 support team who helped her succeed.



## Region 19

## Madison Battles

Madison Battles has a real "can do" attitude. A good scholastic achiever and an avid piano player, she also participates in Shadow Hills High School's Color Guard and Marching Band. Her teachers and classmates love her contagious joy of life.

Her last name of Battles is highly appropriate, because Madison has accomplished most of her success after suffering a brain injury in an auto accident when she was 8 years old. Her injuries left her in a coma for seven weeks and in the hospital for three months. Since then she has had to go through painful physical therapy, which continues to this day.



Yet she has thrived in school, even with the physical demands of the Color Guard and Marching Band, because of her tenacity and the high standards her teachers have set for her. With the help of her educators and a loving family, Madison refuses to set limits on what she can achieve in life.

ACSA is honored to recognize Madison Battles and her Region 19 support team.

## The mission of ACSA ...

is to ensure that all students have the essential skills and knowledge needed to excel. ACSA's Every Student Succeeding program honors students who exceed our expectations and the educators who support them along the way. We are proud to highlight these young men and women who have overcome great obstacles to succeed. They face life's challenges head on. Their stories are remarkable and their futures are bright.

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