



SUCCESS

Alumni Update

FALL 2014

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PERSEVERENCE

by Henry Garcia



Henry Garcia amongst his Canterbury Saints football teammates.

The act of giving up because something is too hard to accomplish is one of the worst ways to deal with life. As a freshman at Canterbury School, I wasn't a talkative guy, nor was I too confident. This self-doubt led to many missed opportunities, mainly in academics. I simply didn't like asking for help. It made me feel weak.

I was repeatedly encouraged by my family and friends to be more open about what was going on around me. I didn't pay attention to that advice since I believed I was doing perfectly fine. In other words, I became comfortable with my quietness, and not asking for help. By the end of sophomore year, I started to realize that I had more potential in every aspect of life, but that my inability to ask for help was getting in the way of my success.

Besides, my academics were improving, especially during sophomore year, particularly in history. I had

finished with an "A" in the class. As I talked with my upperclassmen friends, they recommended me to join the AP United States History class junior year. At first I liked the idea, but my self-doubt began to haunt me. Questions like, "Was I smart enough to take the class? What if I fail out of the class?" started to bolt through my head. When I started to fill out my course selection sheet for my junior year, I hesitated to put down a class under history. I thought about it real hard. Half of me was leaning towards just staying in a regular junior history class, while the other half encouraged me to join the AP course. I decided to join the AP United States History class.

When I was accepted into the class, I was hoping that the class would turn out to be a relatively easy class, but that hope was shattered when the Summer Homework Packet for the class arrived in the mail in

August. In a month we were expected to read 5 chapters, write a page and a half essay on what we read, and memorize all of the content for the AP United States History test in May. I thought to myself, "This must be some type of joke from the teacher." Without hesitation, I worked on the Summer Packet. I didn't know how the teacher wanted me to format the essays, nor did I know what I needed to focus on while writing it. My reading comprehension skill was one of my weaknesses, so it made it much harder for me to write about what I read. It wasn't long before I felt like giving up, but something told me to keep going. I just wanted to see how far I can make it. Luckily I finished the Summer Packet before the first day of class. Without even introducing the class, Mr. Diamond started going over his PowerPoint

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Perseverance

continued

presentation on the Colonization of North America. I left that classroom with at least 10 pages worth of notes.

My hope that this class was going to be easy no longer existed. My self-doubt and the feeling of giving up took the place of hope. Being the only Hispanic in the class, I felt left out. It was as if I wasn't supposed to be there. All of the kids in the class were at least the top 10% of my class, with an average GPA of 3.8. I sat in the class, knowing that I probably wasn't even close to their intelligence. By the next day, my teacher had given everyone back their graded summer packets. There were a few kids who never handed in their packets because they couldn't finish it on time. When I received my packet, I was shocked with my grades. They were graded out of 9 points. I earned a 6 out of 9 on at least three of my five essays. I'll save you the time to calculate that grade. A 6 out of 9 is a 66%. My class grade was down to a 68%. I talked to Mr. Diamond about my grades and said that my essays had a weak thesis and I wasn't putting in enough details into my paragraphs. He helped me see what the problem was. Mr. Diamond told me that it would take some time before I could get a perfect 9 out of 9. Two weeks later, my first AP class test on 3 chapters came up. I was so nervous because at that point, I was so close to giving up. After the test, I was at a breaking point. I got a 68% on the test. I was studying all day and night to improve on my grade, but it wasn't enough. To work hard and not see results was one of the most frustrating moments my junior year.

Mr. Diamond is a very cool guy. He is the school counselor so he knows how frustrated I was. He is very sincere and cares for every one of his students. I talked with Mr. Diamond one last time about my grades. He gave me the option to stay in the class and see how everything turns out or go back to normal U.S. History. At that point, I wanted to be done with AP History. It was hurting my GPA more

than helping it, but I knew I needed some advice from someone else. I told Mr. Diamond I would think about it. That night, I called Fr. Mark. I explained what was going on in the class and that I wanted to leave that class. Fr. Mark simply replied, "When has a San Miguel Man ever quit?" From then on, everything changed. No longer was I held back by my self-doubt, nor was "giving up" part of my vocabulary. My essay grades soon turned from a 6/9 to perfect 9/9. My test scores never went below an 85%. By the Fourth Marking Period, I received an A+ in the class, and also, my GPA that marking period was a 3.8. I no longer felt left out in the class. I was right at the top with my classmates. In May, we all took the national test for AP United States History. It is graded out of 5 points. With hard work and dedication, I earned a 4 on the AP test.

All of this was thanks to having the opportunity to be in the AP U.S. History class and because of Fr. Mark's reply in a time of need. This accomplishment led me to step out of my comfort zone and give back to my school's community.

Since then I was elected Student Body President, Sacristan, and chosen to be a Peer Counselor. As president, I must work to build a communication bridge between the student body and the administration. Being Sacristan requires me to be an example of the Five Core Values of the Canterbury School, Respect, Honesty, Compassion, Self-Reliance, and Spirituality. As a Peer Counselor, anyone can come to me for advice regarding school life or academics. Both, Student Body President and Sacristan, are the top leadership positions the school can offer. I was very fortunate to obtain both thanks to the faith others put in me. Self-doubt can be a real burden, yet it affects many of us who are teenagers. I am more motivated than ever before and for one me, quitting will never be an option again. San Miguel men just don't quit!



Kevin Morales

Kevin Morales is photographed just moments after making his first tuition payment at Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh. The Our Lady of Lourdes graduate said, "I never thought I would ever have the chance to go to college. It feels amazing to be the first person in my family to have this opportunity."



The Class of 2014



Federal Court judge, Colleen McMahon is flanked by members of the SMAN Class of 2014. Judge McMahon offered the commencement address during our June celebration. The judge said, "It has healed my soul to see these young men and to hear about their success." As

a federal judge in the Southern District of New York, Judge McMahon has sentenced many of Newburgh's young men for a variety of criminal activity. To the benefactors of the school, Judge McMahon said, "....this school cannot ever go away."



Annual Summer Alumni Gathering

A hearty thanks goes out to board member Kate Hiebert for her presentation to the Alumni Association of San Miguel Academy in July. Kate, a West Point graduate, helped the boys to understand the

possibilities for college assistance by using our nation's military academies, R.O.T.C., and other military programs which aid in deferring or even satisfying college tuition payments. Many of our graduates appreciated the information as they contemplate their options for college.



Edward Quinn



We are never happier than when Edward Quinn stops by for a rare visit. "Big Ed" has been spending most of his time at The Milton Hershey School in Pennsylvania. As he enters his senior year of high school Ed is making college plans to study sports management. In this photo Lauren Steers is dwarfed by this young man of great stature!



Luis Jimenez, sophomore at Canterbury School, Brian Morales, senior at Our Lady of Lourdes High School, and Henry Garcia, senior at Canterbury School, during a recent visit to The University of Scranton. Garcia has made Scranton his number one choice. Good luck, Henry!

Celebrating Five Years



Julia Gooding of The Harvey School joins Fr. Mark, Omar Coca, Dajour Fisher, Sasha Fox, Vanessa Williams, Alfi Liendo, Javen Stepp-Davis, Bill Porter, Director of Admissions at The Harvey School, Brian Silva, Carol Maida and Lauren Steers, after a recent dinner to celebrate San Miguel Academy's five year relationship with Harvey. Omar will be joining Sasha in the Class of 2018 at Harvey in September. Brian Silva from San Miguel Academy's inaugural Class of 2010 will be moving on to Nichols College in Massachusetts.

The College Search



Alfredo Liendo and Brian Morales stand outside of the Trinity College entrance. SMAN benefactor, Nat Prentice, arranged to have the boys speak at TC this summer during an alumni gathering.

Row Row Row



Under the direction of our teacher and coach, Lisa Kristofik, our rowing program continued during the summer months. In this photo Luis Jimenez, of Canterbury School, and Lisandro Chihuahua, of Oakwood Friends School, occupy the middle pair seats in our San Miguel shell, while assisting 7th graders Nazeem Dabbs and Anthony Cruz as novice rowers. Seventh grader Cristhian Cordero is the crew's coxswain.

Grandview Scholars Selected



Congratulations to Henry Aleman and Omar Coca of the Class of 2014. Both boys were selected for the Grandview Scholarship Award. Grandview aids in tuition gap assistance for boys who demonstrate leadership and academic potential. Henry will be attending the Storm King School, in Cornwall, New York, while Omar will be joining the Class of 2018 at the Harvey School.



Defying the Odds!

In a city where boys of color and low income stand a less than 30% chance of graduating from the local public high school we are proud to announce that all of our guys are making it.

Here's where the SMAN Class of 2010 stands at the present moment:

	High School	College	Potential Major
Angel Cruz	St. Benedict's Prep School	San Diego County Community College	Art Therapy
Jesus Cruz	St. Benedict's Prep School	Fairfield University	Computer Engineering
Gil Garcia	Cornwall High School	Gil is deferring for one year to work and save for college	
Brian Luciano	Our Lady of Lourdes H.S.	Dutchess Community College	Undeclared
Kevin Morales	Our Lady of Lourdes H.S.	Mount Saint Mary College	Undeclared
Jason Noguez	Best Resource Center (G.E.D.)	Orange Community College	Engineering
Edwin Ortega	Newburgh Free Academy	Orange Community College	Nursing
Carlos Perez	Haldane High School/Yorktown B.O.C.E.S.	Dutchess Community College	Undeclared
Andres Ramirez	Newburgh Free Academy	Orange Community College	Design
David Ramos	Our Lady of Lourdes H.S.	Dutchess Community College	Undeclared
Luis Romer	Our Lady of Lourdes H.S.	Mount Saint Mary College	Biology
Brian Silva	The Harvey School	Nichols College	Engineering



An original photo of the Class of 2010 as they are pictured in 2007 with their teacher Mrs. Green and a volunteer. How far they've come!

Denzel Pettway



Denzel Pettway, senior at St. Benedict's Prep, is seen here at the Kearny Relays in the shot put event. Denzel holds multiple school records in both the shot up and discus events while maintaining a B+ average. Several track and field college coaches have expressed interest in this talented young man. Denzel continues to defy the odds!

Brian Lopez



Brian Lopez, senior at the Canterbury School in New Milford, CT, has been featured in multiple productions during his high school career. Above Brian is seen in the role as Nicely Nicely Johnson in the production "Guys and Dolls." It should be noted Brian discovered his singing abilities during freshman year at Canterbury. He's currently looking at colleges that have strong performing arts programs while also pursuing a career in computer science.

Brian Luciano



Brian Luciano, Class of SMAN 2010, and Our Lady of Lourdes High School 2014, is on his way

to Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie while working to pay for his education. Congratulations, Brian!

Guillermo Cruz



Guillermo Cruz, (center left) senior at St. Benedict's Prep, is pictured here among his crew at the New Jersey High School Championships for rowing. Guillermo is an A- student along with being a dedicated rower. We're looking forward to Guillermo's college selection process!

Boys Town

by Arturo Reyes

My father left us when I was five years old. My mother had the responsibility of raising three daughters, and me, the youngest and the only boy. Kids without fathers really struggle. I watched as my three older sisters all dropped out of high school. All of them got pregnant before they reached the age of 18. I began to see how devastating it can be when your mother is working all the time and there is no father around. I felt like I had to be the man of the house and that somehow I had to protect my family. It was a lot of pressure for a little kid just ten years old. I knew I was my mother's last hope. I knew that education needed to fit into my life, but I didn't know where to start. I was never really that successful at school because I was always worrying about my family and things 'going on in the street. People in school used to tell me that i was dumb, stupid, dirty, or too much of a "hood rat" and they all gave up on me.

Then my mom made the best choice of my life, she put me in San Miguel Academy. When I was just about to give up I met Fr. Mark. He told me that he would help me fight against the street and that I could be somebody one day. It took me a longtime before I believed him. San Miguel was hard for me. I wasn't used to working in school and my grades didn't really matter to me. I made it to graduation only because so many of my teachers helped me to get there. I was placed into a program after San Miguel but I didn't do so well. I went back to my old ways and I began to make bad choices. Finally, I got kicked out.

When that happened I saw how disappointed my family was and the people at San Miguel. I believed it was the end of the road for me. But it wasn't. One day Mrs. Steers, Fr. Mark and I got on a plane to visit Boys Town in Nebraska. After our visit Boys Town decided to give me a chance. I packed my bags and my family drove me 1,200 miles and halfway across the country. This was my chance to prove myself. I didn't have to be a hood rat anymore is what I realized. This was my chance to start over. I wanted everyone to be proud of me. That became my goal.

I settled into my new home at Boys Town and I began to follow rules. That was hard for me

because I always like to do things my way. I noticed i didn't worry so much and that my family would be okay without me. I got to call my mom every week and I got to fly home three times a year. I started to look at the big picture and to realize I could be a veterinarian which is my dream job.

Today my education is my biggest focus. I have a 3.5 G.P.A. and I am beginning to think about college. I don't want to get cheated out of life and I want to be a good example for all of my sisters' children. That's what motivates me now. I also see that I can help other kids who are struggling with life. Now I get a good feeling when I can give good advice to a younger boy at Boys Town who's not sure if he wants to be there. I tell him to think of all the positives and to look at the big picture. If I can defy the odds, anyone can!



Arturo dons a fake pair of nerd glasses to celebrate his soaring grades

**DEFYING
THE ODDS**

Please Save the Date for the

Tenth Annual

DEFYING THE ODDS

Dinner and Fundraiser to celebrate the success of San Miguel Academy

Thursday October 23, 2014

6:30 pm at Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY

(contact Cathy Joyce Wooters : cjwooters.sanmiguel@yahoo.com)

