

## Preuss School Student Wins Horatio Alger Award

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Bernice D. Ramirez, a senior at the Preuss School at the University of California, San Diego, has been selected as a 2005 Horatio Alger National Scholar by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. The award includes a \$10,000 college scholarship and an expense paid trip to Washington D.C. April 6-10 for the National Scholars conference.

A resident of Barrio Logan, Ramirez was one of 107 students in the U.S. to be selected this year from 20,000 high school senior applicants.

"The Horatio Alger Association is excited to recognize these young people who have triumphed over incredible challenges in their lives through hard work, perseverance and integrity," noted Dennis R. Washington, president and CEO of the Horatio Alger Association.

"Examining Bernice's achievements, one would hardly know what hardship she has overcome to attend the Preuss School," adds Carol Sobek, Preuss School head counselor. "Many mornings she is the first student at school, preparing hot chocolate to sell to her classmates or to help edit our school yearbook during our 'zero' period before the rest of the students arrive."

Ramirez will be the first of her family to attend college, even to graduate from high school. Raised by a single parent, she has a younger brother and an extended family of cousins who live with them.

"I feel really honored to have been selected," Ramirez said, "and hope to use the scholarship for attending a college on the East Coast." Requirements for the female honorees at the four-day conference include wearing business suits and hosiery-"a first for me," Ramirez says, and a formal gown made to her measurements by the Association. While in Washington the scholars will participate in a series of events that focus on civic education, goal setting and free enterprise.

Bernice is passionate about science, math and robotics, Sobek notes, and plans to major in cognitive science or behavioral neurobiology in college. She just recently won the grand prize in the Preuss School science fair; her entry now will go on to the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair. The exhibit is based on an intern project Ramirez conducts with Isabel Kaye, Ph.D., a leading researcher in environmental science, in which she measures the effect of slope and distance on the regeneration of chaparral in an area damaged by a major fire.

In addition to her internship, Ramirez serves as historian for the student government, writes for the school newspaper, serves as an editor for the yearbook, and plays after school on the varsity soccer team. Evenings she either attends the Barrio Logan College Institute, where she can work on a computer and receive tutoring and mentoring assistance, or Reality Changers, a college preparatory after school program focused on religion.

Last year she served as secretary of the Preuss School Future Educators of America club and was the club's ambassador to the national FEA conference in Dallas, Tex. She also received a scholarship from Reality Changers to attend the Academic Connections Residential Program at UCSD last summer; was named an AP

Scholar with Distinction for receiving an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and was awarded a Bank of America internship in recognition of academic achievement and service to the community.

She has volunteered with the San Diego Park and Recreation Department, the San Diego Audubon Society, the Natural History Museum Atlas Project, a Head Start program and the National Science Teachers Association conference.

Meanwhile, she has worked on weekends at McDonald's but this year she's been awarded a Bank of America paid internship at a Boys and Girls Club which, she says, will be a giant step up financially.

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