

MEOA 2013-2014 Scholarship Recipients

Joseph Akiki

Nominated by Kersten Theberge

Northern Essex Community College PACE Program SSS



My name is Joseph Akiki, I am 20 years old. I am the oldest of three children in my home. I have a brother who is a senior in high school and will be attending college in the fall. I also have a sister who is completing her training as a medic in the Army. I work at my family owned and run pizza store full time, as well as being a full time student. As my income comes from a family run pizza store I do not always have a steady income and I am concerned when anticipating the future cost of furthering my education. Receiving this scholarship would help a great deal in being able to pay off the cost of tuition

When most think of a family business they think it is easy sailing for the child. That is the first mistake most make. It was not a smooth ride at all it has its bumps and bruises just like any job. There are days where you might just yell back and forth at each other and days where it's just perfect. In a small business, such as a pizzeria there is continuing competition throughout the neighborhood.

As competition grows, the harder it is to earn income. While studying to earn a degree, I must also be the quickest delivery driver, the fastest cook and the best representation of Amore Pizza. Many misunderstand a family business, thinking that you automatically have a spot on the staff. This isn't the case. You're always fighting for your job at Amore Pizza. I wouldn't ask for it any other way; you're not handed jobs, you earn them. The family business is what moves me every day in life to become the successful individual I know I can be someday. There may be bumps, but without those obstacles, it wouldn't be a challenge and we wouldn't have to work for our success

I am currently a graduate of Northern Essex Community College, and the two years I have spent here have been nothing less than a fulfilling learning experience. I am working towards an accounting degree and have received my associates in science as a business transfer this spring. Being at NECC has made me realize what my purpose was and what I wanted to do with my life. The atmosphere at NECC allowed me to be able to strive academically and socially. I finished with a 3.91 GPA. All the professors I have met at NECC have been there every step of the way making sure that I had the essential tools to succeed in my classes. They have also given me the confidence to believe that I can make my dreams become a reality.

NECC has given me the opportunity to also reach out and help the Lawrence community. I completed community service at the Cor Unum soup kitchen serving the less fortunate. Also I was able to help with the rebuilding of Lawrence through Groundwork Lawrence to help make the community a better place to live. In school I have been a part of many academic groups. I was offered the job as a Supplemental Instructor (SI) leader to help students with classes and make sure they reach their full potential. In particular I sit in on the class and observe the students to see those who are struggling and assist them, as well as tutor students after class who need help with homework or just have a quick question. I have been inducted into two business honor societies, Alpha Beta Gamma and Phi Theta Kappa. Being in these honor societies has assisted in giving me a taste of the accounting world. I am also an active participant in the PACE program.

My plan is to transfer to the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the fall to further pursue my career as an accountant. The goal I am working towards is to become an international accountant, or work for a large accounting firm. Attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst would allow me to be able to work towards my goals and actually obtain them. By completing the Bachelor's program I will be aware of the laws and ethics behind being an accountant and filing taxes whether it be for a corporation or small business. With a Bachelor's degree, I am confident the effort and energy I have put into my schooling will lead to my success. I am committed to furthering my education and have already submitted my commitment deposit to the

University of Massachusetts Amherst rather than here at NECC. In applying for this scholarship I hope to be given the assistance to further my education. In addition, I have received aid from the NETA scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 and the Academic Honor Scholarship offered by UMass Amherst in the amount of \$2,500. Receiving this scholarship would continue to chip away at the significant amount of financial burden left on my shoulders. Thank you for taking the time to consider me as a potential recipient of this scholarship.

Anna Erazo

Nominated by Austin Mirasolo
Bunker Hill Community College Talent Search



The MEOA Scholarship is the opportunity for me to make my future dreams come true. Since I was young, I always wanted to be a nurse who would help others. This scholarship will not only help me fulfill my dream of becoming a Nurse Practitioner but it will also allow me to do something that I love.

I am a responsible and brave person who has overcome many obstacles. When I was small, my father left and it was my responsibility to take care of my siblings. I helped my mom to overcome the situation we were in. I was able to overcome even the biggest obstacles in life such as keeping my grades up while working two jobs to help my mother. School was always important, and I worked hard to get good grades. Even though sometimes it was hard to balance my school work, job, clubs, volunteer work and internship, I managed to do it. I was able to

adapt to new environments and set goals for myself.

During my senior year my biggest goal was to get As and Bs in all of my classes. I can say that I accomplished this goal; I got honor roll all four quarters and had perfect attendance. Being able to overcome my obstacles with so much in my way has been a bumpy road, but I managed my time and tried my hardest to get where I wanted to be. During my senior year I joined a program at Chelsea High School called The Health and Life Sciences Pathway, a selective program of study for students who want to focus on health and life sciences careers. This pathway empowered me; it showed me all the skills I needed to become a health sciences professional. During this pathway I also took two college classes, Medical Terminology and English 095 in the fall. In total I had nine classes when I started my senior year and I was able to exhibit the discipline and communication skills needed to effectively get through them. The Pathway, along with these two college classes, made me feel ready for college. I was able to complete college work not only in the two college classes but also in my Biotechnology class where I completed lab work at Harvard with mentors and teachers. In the spring I took another class at Bunker Hill, College Writing I. This class made me learn from my mistakes and showed me my weaknesses and strengths as a writer. I was able to communicate with others and model positive behaviors. Over the summer I will be taking a Math course at BHCC in order to be ready for college when I start in the fall. Through attending college in the fall will be a new challenge, I know that I am academically prepared thanks to the decisions I have made over the past two years. In addition to being a top student, I also want to be a great community member by getting involved in clubs.

During high school I have dedicated much of my time to volunteering in my community. At Mass General Hospital I helped decorate a spooky hallway for a Halloween party for kids diagnosed with Diabetes. I also volunteered at the Revere Adult Day Health Care Center to help the elderly celebrate their accomplishments in the program and give them a healthy meal. Lastly, I volunteered at the Early Learning Center where parents and their children played games to develop healthy and communicative lifestyles. Being able to help all these people of different ages gives me a sense of accomplishment; I love to help people find ways to resolve their problems. This is the main reason why I want to become a nurse.

During the school year I had an internship at Mass General Hospital in the physical therapy department which opened up my views on life. I saw how the therapists loved their jobs and how much they cared for their patients. Being able to complete this internship helped me develop ways to communicate with others and be self-aware. I contributed my talent and skills for the betterment of the community and for my

own self-development. I am proud of being able to accomplish so much in one year. I have earned awards such as the Oral Presentation Award, the Biotechnology Award, the English Language Arts Award, and the Dual Enrollment Award for taking classes at Bunker Hill.

Right now I am working at Boston Yogurt part time. This job allows me to communicate effectively with a diverse group of people. Unfortunately, though, my income is not enough to pay for school. Being able to receive the MEOA scholarship would help me pay for college. I am going to complete my Associates Degree at Bunker Hill Community College and then transfer to a private school. Being able to attend a private school has always been my dream but because of money issues I will attend Bunker Hill for two years. The MEOA scholarship will not only help me pay for school but also for books and materials I will need. I know that balancing work and school will be hard but getting this scholarship will benefit my nursing career.

Money is an issue in my family. My mom is a single mother and only she and I work to pay for everything. I am a triplet starting school in the fall with my brother and sister we will be a financial strain as we will have to pay for college in the same year. This scholarship will not only help me but also my siblings as I would try to help pay for their books as well. No matter what, I know that we can get through it as we are a strong family, but it will take a lot of patience and strength. I am a strong and supportive person and I always think positively, but the money situation in my home is really tight and having the opportunity to receive this scholarship will mean a lot to me and my family. People always ask me how I am able to do everything I do: take all these college classes, join the Pathway, work, do my homework, join clubs and Internship. I always tell them that life is not easy and there are always going to be obstacles in your way but you just have to keep thinking positively; work really hard for what you want in life. Without hard work there is no success and I always persevere and work hard to be where I want to be. I might not be rich, but I know that I've got brains and that is all that matters to me because education is the key to success.

Daniel Mahoney

Nominated by Todd Moellendick
Salem State University SSS

My name is Daniel R. Mahoney. I am currently enrolled in the Social Work Bachelors program at Salem State University. I appreciate your time in considering me for this scholarship. I will work very hard to continue on the path I have chose, which my grades can attest to. I have been on the Dean's List every semester I have been in school



Now, a little about me. I was born in Lynn, MA to two wonderful parents that brought me up the right way. My parents raised me to be kind and considerate to everyone, unfortunately this was not the path I chose. Even when I joined the Navy I was rebellious. I was in the service for four years, until my drinking got the best of me. Addiction has beaten me down in the past, but it has no control over my life anymore. I was in prison for one year due to my drinking. This was where I changed my life. I started to do business with God again as well as work on my recovery.

Today I am married to a wonderful woman who is my life. My wife Lynda has some serious medical problems, but I am there for her. Together there is nothing we cannot accomplish together. My life has done a complete 180. No longer is my life ruled by addiction. My wife and I are members of the church and we stay as active as we can.

I have realized that it is not about money any more. Life to me is about helping others less fortunate. You see I was once homeless due to my choices in life. So I know where people are coming from.

In December I just celebrated seven years without drugs or alcohol. I also gave up smoking; it has been 4 years now. I am also involved with numerous self-help groups. These groups help me to stay on track. Today I take care of myself, so I can take care of others.

College so far as taught me more than you could know. I currently hold an Associate's Degree in Drug and Alcohol Rehab, and I am 3 semesters into my Bachelor's Degree. Thanks to my pastor and many others that never gave up on me I am where I am today. Lord willing I will go far in life.

When asked if I would change anything in my life I replied "NO!" These are the things that make me who I am today. Today I love who I am and that's not going to change. I struggle with bills but they get paid. I am not complaining. My wife and I being both homeless at one time know how to prioritize things in our lives. So we continue to work in a forward and positive direction. We are actually below the poverty line. We have a roof over our head and food in our fridge thanks to food stamps. Action energy takes care of our heat. I am in college so I can get out of this rut my wife and I are in. Massachusetts Rehabilitation also helps me get by as well as federal grants. Without their help I would not be able to be in school

Thank you again for your time and consideration in this matter. God Bless!

Marie Phillips

Nominated by Kristen Arnold

Northern Essex Community College PACE Program SSS

I am a thirty-three year old single mother of a child who was born with special needs and I am also a recent graduate of Northern Essex Community College. On May 17, 2014, I graduated from NECC with High



Honors and an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. I am the first person in my family to earn an Associate's Degree, and completing the program at NECC has been a huge accomplishment for me. I am also extremely excited to be able to say that I was chosen for the honor of being this year's student speaker at the Commencement Ceremony. Being able to share my story with the thousands of people who attended the graduation ceremony was an amazing experience that I will never forget. Now that I have earned my Associate's Degree, I plan to transfer to Salem State University, located in Salem Massachusetts, in order to work towards earning my Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. My ultimate goal is to earn my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education, and become a licensed, lead teacher in a public kindergarten. I am a very dedicated and hard-working student. I pride myself on maintaining a good work ethic, and also helping others whenever possible.

When I enrolled in NECC in 2011, I never would have imagined that I would now be preparing to transfer to a four-year university in pursuit of my Bachelor's Degree. As a single mom, my finances are always very tight, and as much as I wanted to earn my Bachelor's Degree, I simply did not think that it was something that I could afford to pursue. NECC has taught me that it's ok to dream big, and advancing to a four-year school is a very big dream of mine. I am very grateful that Salem State University has approved me for various federal grant awards. I am been approved for a federal SEOG Grant, a Mass Grant and a Federal Pell Grant. I also qualify for the Mass Transfer Program, which includes a tuition waiver. At this time, I have not been awarded any time of scholarship funds. While the grant monies that I have been awarded will cover much of my college expenses, they will not cover all expenses and as a single mother I cannot afford to enroll in a payment plan. If chosen for the MEOA Scholarship, I would use the award towards the expenses of textbooks, transportation costs, any remaining tuition fees, and the required supplies needed for my college courses. As my daughter and I currently reside in Haverhill, MA, I am expecting my transportation costs to be high, as I will be commuting to Salem daily.

Through my involvement at NECC and also in my community, I have been able to grow my leadership skills, and I have also experienced many priceless moments through working with young children. During the past two years, I was employed with the JumpStart Program through NECC's work-study program. Through this program, college students work with preschool-aged children in the schools that are located in low-income areas, to work towards strengthening the children's literacy skills. I have become very involved in the NECC community, which has been an absolutely wonderful experience. I completed the first level of the

Student Leadership Development Program, which included completing a minimum of fifteen hours of community service and also attending various workshops to build my leadership skills. I completed my service hours at Emmaus House, a family homeless shelter in Haverhill, MA. At Emmaus House, I worked with the STEP Program, which included providing the children who reside at the shelter with tutoring assistance and also providing various arts and crafts activities for the younger children. I enjoyed volunteering at Emmaus House so much that I decided to go above and beyond the required fifteen hours of service, instead completing over six months of service at the shelter. I have now also completed the second level of the Student Leadership Development Program, which is entitled the Presidential Student Ambassadors Program. The requirements for this program include completing a minimum of fifty service hours at NECC, by helping out with various events that take place over the academic year. I recently volunteered at the MCC Conference that NECC hosted on Professional Day. It was a great day and an amazing experience that I would never have been a part of without the Student Leadership Development Program. It has been a very rewarding experience, giving back to the NECC community and to the community in which I live. I absolutely intend to become very involved in the Salem State University campus community as well.

Through my involvement in the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, and also the student leadership Development Program, I learned many important leadership skills, which I feel is an important part of becoming a successful educator. Serving as the President of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society has been a huge honor, and it has been really exciting to brainstorm with other PTK members about how we can help out in our community and make a positive impact. I am also a member of the PACE (Pathways to Academic and Career Excellence) Program at NECC. This program has been incredibly helpful in many ways, including assistance with developing important career skills and tools, assistance with course registration, and also just giving me moral support when I needed it the most.

As a single mother, and full-time college student, I have certainly encountered my fair share of challenges, but I feel that these challenges have helped to shape me into the dedicated, driven student that I am today. Returning to school many years after graduating from high school has certainly not been an easy road. I have worked harder in the past three years that I have spent at NECC than I would have thought was possible, and I wouldn't want it to be any other way. Yes, it is challenging to be a full-time student and a single parent, and yes, as a full-time college student, my budget is incredibly tight; but I feel that my life experiences and my daughter give me even more motivation to strive for excellence in my studies. Life is full of challenges, but I feel that it is important for one to be able to rise to the occasion.

Other students have asked me my secret to doing well in school. I don't feel that I have a secret, really, I just work hard. To me, going to my classes, studying, and even taking exams aren't tedious chores. I truly love school. I love to learn and I'm proud to be able to call myself a graduate of NECC. As a future teacher, I hope to instill this passion for school, this love of learning, in all my students. The children truly are the future, and as a future early childhood educator, I proudly take on the responsibility of preparing the next generation of students for the beginnings of their educational paths.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Nairobi Sanchez

Nominated by Karen Mitchell

Northern Essex Community College PACE Program SSS



Being a high school dropout is something I was once ashamed of but it wasn't until my first semester at Northern Essex Community College when I received my grades and realized what an accomplishment it truly was. In high school, I had faced copious family issues and in particular the ones that were most difficult to deal with took control of my mental state, which distracted me from my education.

My brother had been ill of the heart, a pre-teen child of the age of just 10 who had open heart surgery from one of the rarest diseases the doctors have no cure for. My family's financial and mental state was in disarray and taking care of one another was a priority instead of an option. Due to the unfortunate circumstance in my junior year of high

school, I dropped out to tend to my family's needs. This was a difficult decision and I had promised myself that whenever I was given the opportunity again, I would return to high school and commit to my education; a year later I did just that. I had the desire to persevere and this time I would finish my high school experience stronger than anyone would ever anticipate.

My senior year of high school began great but ended with a tragic death in the family. On December 27th, 2011 my father passed away. I would not let another tragedy impede my education and, though it was one of the most difficult moments of my life, I knew that my father would want me to graduate. With this in mind on June 1, 2012, as I walked across the stage with my cap and gown, I told myself that that moment was monumental and I would dedicate it to my father.

Although I graduated from high school at the bottom of my class, I graduated at my community college at the very top with a GPA of 3.7 and the completion of the Commonwealth Honors program. I know that my ability to overcome obstacles comes from tough experiences and having a profound amount of faith and because of this, I believe that success for me is attainable. I plan on pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in political science and then after I plan on attending law school. It would be truly astonishing to know that MEOA would be a part of my educational journey both financially and supportively.

By becoming so heavily involved in student life, I have managed to meet so many students and faculty from the NECC community. I joined clubs like Amnesty International, Students for a Democratic Society, PACE-TRiO, Phi Theta Kappa, Student Senate, Contemporary Affairs, Student Leadership Development, and the Presidential Student Ambassadors program. Being president of Amnesty International, I have learned so much about global human rights and I had the pleasure of planning and going on a trip to New York City to volunteer for Hurricane Sandy cleanup. As president of Student Senate, I have advocated for solutions to issues that concern the students and faculty such as lowering the cost of textbooks on campus. Such efforts on my behalf have been recognized by the Governor of Massachusetts when I was selected to be one of the "29 Who Shine" at the State House on May 8th, 2014.

I have applied to three institutions and my financial package is complete from UMass Amherst. George Washington University and UMass Boston have not yet sent me my financial aid package for Fall 2014. This insecurity regarding my finances for next semester reassures me that the MEOA scholarship will help me financially, but it is also a scholarship that emphasizes students who have excelled in their education opportunity program and overcome obstacles. Undoubtedly, the MEOA scholarship represents all that I stand for.