



**Wharton County
Junior College**

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Marketing and Communications
911 Bolling Highway
Wharton, Texas 77488

Toll free: 1.800.561.9252, ext. 6322
Office: 979.532.6322
Fax: 979.532.6493

‘NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE’

Presidential Scholars trip to Washington D.C. inspires WCJC students

WHARTON, TEXAS – Wharton County Junior College sophomore Lara Ramirez had an epiphany while traveling to Washington D.C. recently with the college’s Presidential Scholars.

After meeting with Congressional leaders and successful business owners from across the nation, Ramirez came to the understanding that these individuals – as powerful and impressive as they are – are not so different from the average person.

“They showed me that nothing is impossible and that the most important thing is to never give up on your goals and dreams,” the Wharton native said. “I realized that with hard work and dedication, I could make similar achievements. That could be me up there working at the Capitol.”

Presidential Scholars coordinator Catherine Shoppa couldn’t be happier that Ramirez had such a pivotal experience. The purpose of the Washington D.C. trip was to provide the scholars with a broader perspective on life, careers and what’s possible with a positive attitude.

“We want to really impact these students’ lives,” Shoppa said. “The Presidential Scholars program is about helping them achieve what they never dreamed could happen. Through education, all things are possible.”

During their trip to Washington D.C., the students met with legislators and business leaders including U.S. Rep. John Culberson of Texas, Commander Tim Winter, Dr. Timothy Shah of Georgetown University, John Benziger of DTZ Real Estate, David Foster of Norton Rose & Fulbright, Dr. Aaron Salzburg from the Department of State, Dr. Chris Holmes from the U.S. Agency for International Development and Christy Walika of the American Bankers Association.

The scholars also toured Georgetown University, Mount Vernon, the Library of Congress and several museums as well as attending a Congressional hearing of the House Appropriations Committee.

Founded last fall, the Presidential Scholars is an educational-based group aimed at providing unique opportunities for WCJC students. Field trips, dinners and volunteering opportunities are all a part of the experience. The program is open to any WCJC student who has completed at least one semester of coursework and has a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

Around 30 applications were received for the inaugural group, with 10 members eventually chosen. They include Ramirez, Rachel Scott of Rosenberg, William Blanchard of Bulverde, Kristin Afzaal of Sugar Land, Jamonique Florence of Wharton, Jacob Medina of El Campo, Tallon Canaris of Eagle Lake, Darius Glover of Houston, Angel Becerra of Wharton and Tabitha Myers of Wharton.

Myers, who has visited Washington D.C. on several occasions to see family, said traveling with the Presidential Scholars was an entirely different experience. She said the group received the “VIP” treatment, gaining a behind-the-scenes look at Congressional hearings, special tours at Mount Vernon and the Library of Congress and luncheons with top business leaders.

“My grandfather told me this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and he lives there,” Myers said. “It was a phenomenal trip.”

Both Myers and Ramirez credited Houston philanthropist Stewart Morris Sr. with providing the group such “royal” treatment. In addition to helping underwrite the program, Morris traveled with the group to Washington D.C., using his personal contacts to make the experience extra special for the students.

“I’ve been to some of these places before, but thanks to Mr. Morris, I’ve now seen them in a whole new way,” Myers said.

WCJC President Betty McCrohan also attended. She said the trip was beneficial in several ways.

“Our main purpose was to demonstrate the vast opportunities available to our students if they continue in their education and never forget the value of setting and achieving goals,” McCrohan said. “Our Presidential Scholars gained a unique insight into the inner workings of global business and the legislative system and made contacts that could prove invaluable down the road.”

McCrohan added that the trip was a fun way to get to know the students more personally.

“I really enjoyed spending time with the students and I know all of them will do amazing things in their lives,” she said.

Myers’ future plans include finishing up at WCJC and then transferring to Houston Baptist University, where she plans to major in international business. She said the trip to Washington D.C. intensified her desire for a more unique career.

“You realize you don’t have to put yourself in a box,” Myers said. “The trip really broadened my perspective on everything.”

Ramirez will head to Texas State University this fall and pursue a degree in sociology. She said coming to WCJC – and getting involved with the Presidential Scholars – was one of the best decisions she has ever made.

“If I had gone straight off to a four-year university, I wouldn’t have had these opportunities,” she said. “It was the smartest decision I’ve made to come to WCJC for my first two years. I would encourage everyone to do it.”

Myers agrees.

“I’ve really enjoyed my time here at WCJC and my experience with the Presidential Scholars,” she said. “Everyone here welcomes you with open arms and they truly want you to succeed.”

Applications are now being taken for the Presidential Scholars’ 2015-2016 class. For more details or to download an application, visit the college’s website – www.wcjc.edu – and click on “Office of the President” under the “About Us” tab. Then follow the link to the Presidential Scholars page. The deadline is Aug. 1.

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