135 awarded scholarships

ABOVE: Courtney Turner places an American Dream Scholarship medallion around the neck of Zachary Henry Wednesday at Calbuco College. BELOW: George Ow Jr. (at podium) introduces each student who received an American Dream Scholarship.

By TODD GUILD

APTON — After Andrea Mendosa graduated from Renaissance High School this year, she will enroll in Calbuco College in preparation to study nursing. A long journey to be sure, but her concerns about finances as she attends Calbuco College will be alleviated somewhat by the 135 American Dream Scholarships she received Tuesday from the George Ow Jr. family.

“I’m grateful,” she said. “This is a lot of help.”

Mendosa was one of 135 students who received the award, the highest number awarded in the 24-year history of the American Dream Scholarship, during which the Ow family has given more than $630,000 to 977 graduating Santa Cruz County high school seniors.

In an address to the crowd that attended the event at Calbuco College’s Season House, President John Hendrickson called the award, “the finest example of civic responsibility.”

“I have never known a program that comes close to the success of the American Dream Scholarship,” he said.

Watsonville High School student Cherie Mendos-Harias, who also plans to study nursing, said the $300 was a welcome surprise.

“My family does not have a lot of money, so this is going to help me a lot,” she said.

Soquel High School Omar Marques said he plans on studying digital media at Calbuco.

“This shows that there are people out there willing to help me go to college and get on the right path,” he said. “This really helps me out.”

Harpur High School senior Melanie Garcia said the scholarship will help relieve financial needs help sometimes, and if you can get that help when you need it, it can get you on your way.”

The American Dream Scholarship is the largest among the 75 scholarships managed by the Calbuco College Foundation.

“Hundreds of local youth have received financial support and a psychological boost to succeed in college through the American Dream Scholarships,” said Calbuco College Foundation Executive Director Melodie Silverstein. “The generosity of George Ow Jr. and his family have poisoned to our community is truly inspiring.”

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Jesse Diego, a Renaissance High graduate, was the first person in his family to graduate from high school and move on to college.