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The True Spirit of
AMERICA
★ **LIVES ON** ★

BY CANDY CARSON & PAM MARSHNER

IN THIS SEVENTH MONTH OF THE YEAR, WE
HONOR THE **AMERICAN SPIRIT** AS WE
REMEMBER OUR FOREFATHERS AND ALL THEY
FOUGHT FOR SO THAT EACH OF US CAN
LIVE THE **AMERICAN DREAM.**

25 YEARS of GIVING

The American spirit is...

- A spirit of problem-solving creativity
- A spirit of dedication to the pursuit of excellence
- A spirit of humanitarianism: sharing with those less fortunate and helping our fellow man
- A spirit of self-sacrifice
- A spirit of entrepreneurialism
- A spirit of valuing the individual, considering each person has potential, and affording each one the opportunity to develop themselves to be the best they can be to pursue their dreams!

The Carson Scholars Fund (CSF) has been recognizing and rewarding students who embody the American spirit for 25 years!

These young people from all 50 states not only dedicate themselves to excellence in their lives, particularly academics, but they also demonstrate their humanitarianism through volunteer work, by creating their own charitable initiatives, and by addressing community needs through creative problem solving.

Consider the coronavirus crisis and Carson Scholar Dhruv Pai, an aspiring physician and researcher who volunteers at Walter Reed Hospital. This young man noticed a need and stepped up to the plate to help those who are vulnerable, starting a volunteer movement that has spread from Maryland to New York, the West Coast and Canada.

Consider an eighth grader with autism who recognizes that his perspective on the world is unique. Carson Scholar Michael Kennedy sees this as a positive and something that makes him special. His perseverance and optimism have made him not only a stellar student and the president of his class, but also a student who



Dr. Ben Carson
and his wife
Candy Carson

cares for his peers and community through mentoring and volunteer work.

Consider Flint, Michigan, where tainted water has been a huge problem. Thirteen-year-old Carson Scholar Gitanjali Rao, after viewing the community problem on the news, invented a lead-testing device (Tethys, named after the Greek Titan goddess of clean water) that is effective and inexpensive to make. She is working with a Denver water facility to develop a prototype to mass produce. She not only has her own Wikipedia page, but last year was on Forbes' "30 under 30"! She is currently working on a solution for opioid addiction!

These are just a few examples of the thousands of Carson Scholars who continue to keep the American spirit alive, by valuing excellence in education and service.

WHAT IS A CARSON SCHOLAR?

A Carson Scholar becomes a positive role model for his/her peers as early as fourth

THE COMMON FACTOR THAT EACH SCHOLAR POSSESSES IS THE INCLINATION TO USE THE GIFTS THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN, THE OBSTACLES THEY HAVE FACED, AND THE CHARACTER THEY POSSESS TO CREATE SOMETHING BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES.



West Coast Carson Scholars Zachary Patterson, Elizabeth Orkeh and Jazlyn Peraza show off their medals

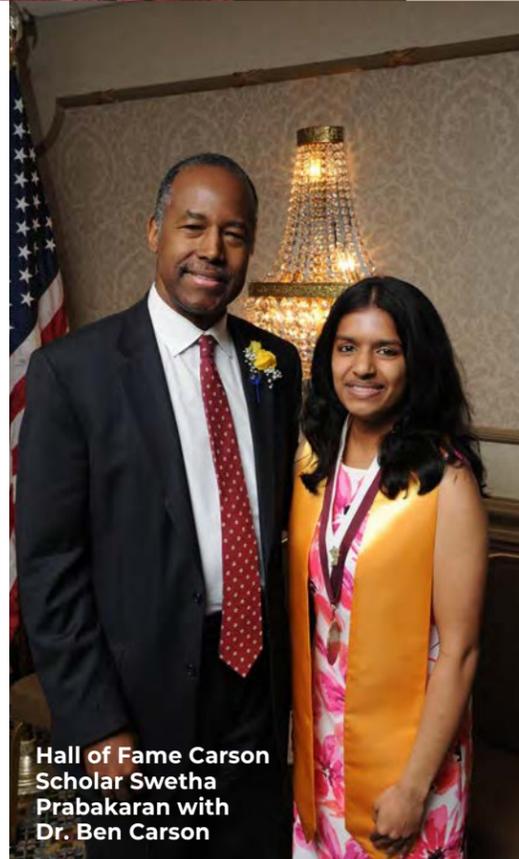
grade. Carson Scholars are truly representative of what it means to be an American. They come from all walks of life, ethnicities, and backgrounds. The common factor that each scholar possesses is the inclination to use the gifts they have been given, the obstacles they have faced, and the character they possess to create something bigger than themselves.

A couple of questions arise: But why fourth grade? Isn't that a little young to be thinking about college, and receiving a scholarship for it? The common saying, "Through third grade children are learning to read; after third grade students read to learn." should not be taken lightly. Only one-in-three students read proficiently by

that point. Studies have shown that having college and career discussion early on in the life of a student leads to better preparation in understanding and achieving goals in high school. The Carson Scholars Program is unique in the fact that it recognizes and rewards students as young as fourth grade with hopes to encourage young learners to persevere.

The program encourages educators to nominate students who they believe show excellent leadership potential through their academic pursuits, but also character in solving civic problems and giving back to their communities.

To be considered for the prestigious recognition, a student must possess



Hall of Fame Carson Scholar Swetha Prabakaran with Dr. Ben Carson



Carson Scholars celebrate with Candy Carson at North Carolina Banquet

THE STUDENTS ARE CELEBRATED IN GRAND STYLE AS THE BANQUETS OFTEN HOST 500-1,000 PEOPLE INCLUDING CELEBRITIES, BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, EDUCATORS, FAMILY, AND PEERS.

at least a 3.75 GPA and demonstrate humanitarian qualities or caring about others through community service or other volunteer initiatives. Students in grades 4-11 across the country are recognized as Carson Scholars without regard to race, gender identification, faith, political affiliation, or financial need. Upon selection a student receives a \$1,000 college scholarship which is invested on their behalf until they matriculate at a four year accredited institution. They also receive a medal,

certificate, recognition package, local press and an invitation to a regional awards banquet. Their school receives a trophy that is every bit as impressive as any others in the school's display case. The students are celebrated in grand style as the banquets often host 500 to 1,000 people including celebrities, business and community leaders, educators, family, and peers.

Once named, the scholars are encouraged to reapply each year through their senior year in high school. The repeat recognition

encourages students to continue on their path and lead by example. Throughout the years the organization maintains communication with the students to encourage and reinforce their accomplishments. This extends beyond graduation as the CSF has an impressive Hall of Fame and is in the process of creating an Associate Leadership Council encouraging past scholars to guide and mentor future generations.

In his application to become a 2020 Carson

THE COMMON SAYING, "THROUGH THIRD GRADE CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO READ; AFTER THIRD GRADE STUDENTS READ TO LEARN." SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.



CARSON SCHOLARS ARE SOLVING PROBLEMS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIETY BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND GLOBALLY.

Scholar, **Landon Vyhmeister**, an eleventh grader from Soldotna, Alaska, succinctly expressed why empowering youth to value education and remain civic-minded is so important. Landon wrote, "Education is a fundamental facet of a working society and everyone has knowledge that gives them opportunities to positively impact their world. ...With formal education, opportunities arise to help which can eliminate a problem at its center, instead of merely mitigating its negative effects."

MISSION

The CSF's mission is to 'Discover Promise and Reward Excellence.' The scholar spotlights in this article emphasize why supporters feel so strongly that by recognizing this promise early, we are directly impacting the course of this country's future leadership. Carson Scholars are solving problems directly related to the needs and challenges faced by society both domestically and globally.

When Dr. Carson was on the speaker's circuit in the 1990s,

the schools where he spoke had many large trophies for students who excelled in sports and entertainment, like band, orchestra and cheerleading, but the academic role models had close to nothing to celebrate their achievements.

"During that time, an international survey was released comparing the math and science aptitude of high school students from 22 countries. And the mighty United States with all its resources and status was not number one.

It was not in the top five or even the top ten! Our students ranked #21 out of 22 countries, and the only country we beat out was one where children have to dodge bullets all day! That was a wake-up call for us. We knew something needed to be done if the United States would be able to continue to enjoy the same benefits and opportunities its citizenry had in the past. In this day and age of Thomas Friedman's "flat world," global competition is no longer a possible theory but an actual statement of fact. Consider the fact that the United States has approximately 330 million people. However, India has four times that many people, and China has four times the American populace as well! America cannot afford NOT to develop all of her people! Having a Carson Scholar in each and every school in the nation would mean that these positive academic role models would be opening the eyes of their peers to actually visualize and dream of possibilities of their own success."

—Candy Carson

To understand the commitment Dr. and Mrs. Carson have to the Carson Scholars Fund and this country's youth, it is important to know their story. As with most great leaders, the Carsons' story did not begin on the day they created the Carson Scholars Fund. Their character, great faith, and drive to create a better world for those who follow them were strong motivators. While the Carsons did not



meet until college, both grew up in Detroit. They saw firsthand the outcomes of society's problems including poverty, racism and a lack of education. In the book and movie, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*, Dr. Carson describes the obstacles he was forced to overcome and credits those who inspired him to believe in himself including his mother, Sonya, who was his driving force. He reflects on the premise that believing that he was smart was the first step in accomplishing his goals. Once he started to apply himself through perseverance and commitment, he started seeing results and realized he could accomplish whatever he set his mind to. His mother, with only a third grade education, held the stark belief that education would free her children from a life of poverty and discontent. While

she struggled herself, she was steadfast in making sure her two sons achieved their inherent potential.

"The fact of the matter is, once I developed confidence in myself and began to believe that I was smart, then all of those innate abilities began to come out. Everybody has them, everybody who has a normal brain, because there is no such thing as an average human being. If you have a normal brain, you are superior. There's almost nothing that you can't do."

—Dr. Ben Carson

While the road was not always a smooth one, young Ben did abide by the wisdom of his mother and other adults who saw his potential and fortified his drive. Ben Carson went on to become a world-renowned neurosurgeon, author of nine books, bearer



CARSON SCHOLARS WILL BE THIS COUNTRY'S LEADERS IN BUSINESS, MEDICINE, EDUCATION, AND IN CAREERS THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN DEVELOPED.

of more than 70 honorary doctorates and the recipient of countless accolades and awards. During his career, *Time* magazine named him as one of the country's foremost physicians and scientists; a "Living Legend" by the Library of Congress; a NAACP Springarn Medal winner and a Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree, the country's highest civilian honor.

Investing in a Carson Scholar is a chance to not only fulfill the dreams of a student who shows both promise and compassion, but also enable them to shine as a positive role model and inspire their peers to strive harder. Carson Scholars will be this country's leaders

in business, medicine, education, and in careers that have not yet been developed. As early as elementary school, these students are characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit evidenced in their commitment to finding solutions to problems they see in their schools, communities, and globally.

The belief that investing in a child's future will help shape society and provide for a greater outcome has led to immeasurable support and generosity for the organization from a diverse group of individual donors, corporations, and foundations. The CSF, along with their educational partners and volunteers,

work diligently to recognize and reward America's youth, their ultimate goal being to have a Carson Scholar in every school in the country.

Due to the dedication of the donors, educators and volunteers, the CSF is able to invest 90 cents of every dollar raised to support educational initiatives. To date over 9,300 scholarships have been awarded to deserving students across the country. As the organization approaches their 25th anniversary of the first awards ceremony, they are close to awarding the 10,000th scholarship recipient! You can be a part of this landmark achievement!

RECOGNITION

Over the years the Carson Scholars Fund has won awards for their vision and impact, including the William E. Simon Award, the Ronald McDonald House Award and a Grammy Award for a Public Service Announcement (PSA). The Carsons will tell you "We don't do this for the awards; it's for the effect that these dedicated, self-sacrificing, creative students are having on our nation! We want to remain competitive in this ever-changing world, and the way to do that is to get behind these future leaders to help them maintain their motivations and continue to strive for success, thereby influencing others to do the same."

 [Click to View Grammy Award winning PSA](#)

BEN CARSON READING ROOMS

"Just 5 more minutes" is often heard from students when a teacher tells them it is time to wrap up their time in a Ben Carson Reading Room. The Ben Carson Reading Project, the second initiative of the Carson Scholars Fund, was launched twenty years ago as a complementary program to the Carson Scholar Program. The first hurdle which must be crossed to help a student become successful is fostering a love of reading. Dr. Carson credits much of his success to his mother nurturing a love of reading in his early years. While he acknowledged that there were times he would have rather been outside running with friends, his mother's insistence that he and his brother spend time reading was life-changing.

So often, for children, especially in areas where reading materials are scarce, dated, or nonexistent, reading is seen as a chore. Ben Carson Reading Rooms are created with the sole purpose of providing a pleasurable environment where children feel safe, have the ability to relax and explore their own interests; ultimately allowing a child to be transported to a place within their own imagination. Third grader, Tamar, said of his reading room, "It is comfortable and makes me feel smart." Empowering children to seek their full potential is what will ultimately drive them to change the world in which they live.


477/912
New/Recognized
Carson Scholars
in 2020


OVER 750
Colleges/Universities
have Carson Scholars


More than
\$7.1 MILLION
Has Been Paid Out
on Behalf of
Carson Scholars


90¢ OF EVERY \$1 RAISED
Goes Toward Benefiting
Young Students


75+
Reading Room
Sponsors


\$3.1 MILLION
Invested in the
Reading Room
Program

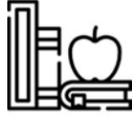

9,300
Scholarships have
been Awarded
in 50 States &
Washington D.C.


Our Alumni Network has
OVER 6,100
Members


878
Schools had
Carson Scholars
in 2020


Over **230**
Reading Rooms in
23
States


106,000+
Student
Participants


115,000
Books
Purchased



SPOTLIGHT ON CARSON SCHOLARS

DHRUV PAI
2020 CARSON SCHOLAR
SILVER SPRING, MD



Dhruv Pai hopes to become a physician who does clinical work and also biomedical research. He is interested in pursuing a combined MD/PhD degree allowing him to help vulnerable populations using clinical

skills and also allowing him to do research on developing new approaches to treating medical concerns. Dhruv volunteers at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, as a Red Cross volunteer. He shares that "Volunteering has been an eye-opening exercise for me as it has enabled me to observe a wide range of medical professionals and their approaches to treating and working with their patients. Besides increasing my appreciation and gratitude to the active duty military as well as our veterans for their service to our country, this volunteering effort has made me sincerely appreciate those serving in the medical field. It also made me realize that serving my community altruistically gives me a lot of satisfaction and pleasure."

During the coronavirus pandemic, Dhruv started a group called Teens Helping Seniors. Through efforts to help his own grandparents, he recognized the need of many in his community who had no one to help them with errands and critical needs such as food and medicines. He gathered a group of other teens to help. Dhruv received media recognition for his efforts and his group has gained nationwide traction with chapters springing up in New York, on the West Coast and in Canada.

 [Click to Read More About Dhruv's Story](#)

GITANJALI RAO
2-TIME CARSON SCHOLAR
HIGHLANDS RANCH, CO



Gitanjali Rao is a 9th grader from Highlands Ranch, CO. She is currently conducting research through the University of Colorado, in the department of Cell Biology, to find a solution for prescription opioid addiction using the latest in genetic engineering. This initiative provided her recognition as a world finalist in a Technovation challenge and a Health Pillar award by TCS Ignite Innovation. She introduced the device in TEDtalksNayibaat India.

Gitanjali was previously named America's Top Young Scientist of 2017 by the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge, with a patent pending device to detect lead in water faster than any other current techniques. She is also the winner of a global Paradigm science challenge and was named a Forbes 30 under 30 scholar.

"THE CSF HAS ENABLED ME TO BE MOTIVATED AND EXCEL IN MY ACADEMICS WHILE CONTRIBUTING TIME TO OUR COMMUNITY. OUR GENERATION IS GROWING UP IN A TIME WHERE WE ARE SEEING PROBLEMS THAT NEVER EXISTED BEFORE. CSF IS DEVELOPING LEADERS OF TOMORROW WHO NOT ONLY EXCEL IN EDUCATION, BUT GIVE BACK THEIR TIME AND SOLVE OTHERS' PROBLEMS ENSURING THERE IS A WORLD WHERE KINDNESS PREVAILS."

— Carson Scholar, Gitanjali Rao

Click to Donate



Gitanjali recently launched an anti-cyberbullying service based on AI/Machine Learning using Natural Language Processing in the community called "KINDLY" under the guidance of Microsoft. She was awarded an eCYBERMISSION STEM in Action grant to implement the solution.

She is an active STEM promoter and is involved in promoting STEM based activities in schools, clubs and the community. She was selected as the National STEM Scout of the Year. She runs innovation sessions weekly and has impacted about 20,000 elementary, middle and high school students by running innovation sessions globally.

Gitanjali has open-sourced her lead detector invention processor, her colorimetry based algorithm for prescription opioid detection and app code for the community and it has been used for other applications.

Some of Gitanjali's hobbies include playing the piano, Indian classical dancing and singing, swimming, fencing, and baking. She has been playing classical music for almost nine years. She shares her talent of playing piano in local assisted living centers.

Gitanjali aspires to study genetics combined with computer science. She hopes to keep writing, discovering, and sharing her knowledge in the future. She is an avid problem solver and thrives in collaborating with organizations that promote innovation and creativity.

 [Click to Read More About Gitanjali's Story](#)

MICHAEL KENNEDY
2020 CARSON SCHOLAR
PITTSBURGH, PA



Eighth-grader **Michael Kennedy** acknowledges that part of what makes him special is that he has autism and sees the world differently than his peers. He believes that small acts of kindness go a long way. Michael acknowledges, "I have a kind caring heart and I love helping people in need. I love helping people that are less fortunate than me. I want to make the world a better place." Michael is involved in his schools 'Langley's Blessings in a Back Pack Program.' He packs food and delivers it to students who are in need every Friday. He also helps organize Langley's clothing closet. The clothing closet is for students in need of clothes, coats, hats, etc. He participates in a mentoring program called Boys 2 Men and is the president of the student council.

"I HAVE A KIND CARING HEART AND I LOVE HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED."

— Carson Scholar, Michael Kennedy

ALEXANDRIA HENSON
7-TIME CARSON SCHOLAR
CAPE CORAL, FL



Alexandria Henson's academic excellence, including her current 5.38 GPA, and humanitarian goals have inspired her to create a grant winning youth environmental outreach program, Project L.E.A.D. (Local Environmental Activist Development), which educates and mobilizes a network of local youth through beach cleanups and youth seminars. Energized by participating in the last seven Youth Ocean Conservation Summits, organizing multiple World Oceans Day celebrations, and as a five-time Team Leader for the annual Global Youth Service Days, Alex has successfully cleaned hundreds of pounds of trash and marine debris from the ocean. She is the Youth Council Chairwoman for both the Keep Florida Beautiful and Keep Lee County Beautiful organizations. Proud of her Carson Scholar achievement, Alex continues to work with other civic organizations, including Rotary Youth Leadership, SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Youth Advisory Council, Keep America Beautiful Youth Advisory Council, and the Florida Gulf Coast University Accelerated Collegiate Student program.



CARSON SCHOLARS
Alumni & Hall of Fame



CSF ALUMNI: Bowen Jiang

Bowen is a fellowship trained neurosurgeon and spine surgeon in Orange County, CA. He attended college and medical school at Stanford University. After graduation, Bowen completed his neurosurgery residency at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where Dr. Ben Carson had served as Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery and as a professor of Neurosurgery, Oncology, Plastic Surgery, and Pediatrics. Bowen served as the Assistant Chief of Service 2019 and also completed fellowship training in robotic and minimally invasive spine surgery while at Hopkins. During his training, he was awarded the Walter Dandy Award for Excellence in Neurosurgery and the Frank Coulson Jr. Award for Clinical Excellence. The latter honor is awarded annually to the resident who exemplifies clinical excellence defined as a level of mastery in certain aspects of patient care.



HALL OF FAME: Diana Wilson

Diana is a Social Entrepreneur, Googler, Ecosystem Builder, Published Author and International Speaker. Diana is a proud first generation college graduate. After graduating from the University of Virginia with degrees in Sociology and Women Gender Studies, Diana created Yielding Accomplished African Women to provide other women with the opportunities she had experienced. Yielding Accomplished African Women is an expertly crafted, innovative and forward-thinking non-profit organization that serves to economically empower the lives of African women, and in turn enrich the global market. Due to her incredible leadership and community service, Diana received the Forbes 30 Under 30 Scholar Award, Future of Ghana 30 Under 30 Award and the McKinsey's Woman Impact Award to name a few. She has served as a keynote speaker and panelist at top conferences around the world.

For more information about the Carson Scholars Fund, please visit their website at www.carsonscholars.org

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90¢ OF EVERY \$1 RAISED

Goes Toward Benefiting Young Students

carsonscholars.org