

The Herald-News

Plainfield teen is Golden Apple Scholar

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From Submitted Reports

PLAINFIELD -- Elizabeth Martinez, a senior at Plainfield High School-Central Campus, was named a 2010 Golden Apple Scholar.

Martinez is one of only 105 students across the state to receive the honor, which includes \$23,000 in college financial assistance to pursue a career in education - which, Martinez said, is her passion.

"Ever since I can remember, I never wanted to do anything else," Martinez said. "I had great teachers who were inspiring, and I have always wanted to do the same."

Martinez applied for the program with her cousin's encouragement. He was selected as a scholar the previous year.

She applied last November and interviewed for the scholarship in January.

On March 3, Martinez's mom called her while she was on the bus coming home from school to let her know an envelope from Golden Apple had arrived.

"I was so excited and anxious that I ran right into the house and opened the envelope and all I saw was, 'Congratulations,' and I just started screaming," Martinez said.

What the honor entails

As a Golden Apple Scholar, Martinez will pursue an undergraduate education at one of 53 Illinois universities while she receives additional teacher preparation.

Through the program, Martinez will attend four summer institutes for Golden Apple Scholars that provide extensive pre-student-teaching internships, mentoring and coursework on the art of teaching by Golden Apple award winning teachers.

When Martinez finishes the program and enters the classroom as a teacher, she will have acquired more than three times the classroom experiences than traditionally prepared teachers.

"To receive this scholarship is just amazing," Martinez said. "It has motivated me, and I cannot even describe how excited I am."

In return for the extensive professional and financial support they receive, Scholars agree to teach for five years in an Illinois school of need. The school is identified by having a significant student population from low-income households, or from mediocre to poor performances on state tests.

"I attended schools of need," Martinez said. "So it will be nice to be able to give back."

Martinez is currently enrolled in the child care and development program at WILCO and plans to pursue a degree in elementary education or special education.

"I am going to college because I received this scholarship," Martinez said. "I feel blessed with this award."

Scholars are also visited and mentored after they begin their careers, and participate in a special conference for Scholars and their colleagues.

This year, 2,125 students were nominated for the program across the state and 105 were selected as the 2010 Class of Golden Apple Scholars. This is the 22nd year for the Scholars program. It is a division of Golden Apple Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that honors excellent teachers and provides them with the support for professional

development.