

***Reaching Your Potential***  
Spring 2010 Scholarship Recipients

**Gabriel Akot**, Omaha

Referred by Vocational Rehabilitation, Omaha

Growing up in war-torn Sudan, Gabriel lost an arm in an explosion. After living in a refugee camp for several years, his family moved to Omaha where he is working with Voc Rehab to get a prosthetic arm. He attends Metropolitan Community College with plans to transfer to the University of Nebraska and eventually earn a medical degree.

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**Rebecca Bell**, Gering

Referred by Student Support Services, Western Nebraska Community College, Scottsbluff

A single mother, Rebecca Bell postponed college for many years to help support her family and deal with many challenges. When a health scare left her unable to work, she returned to college and is pursuing a business degree at Chadron State College. She plans to get her master's degree so she can teach accounting at a college level.

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**Audrianna Edmonds**, Omaha, NE

Referred by Student Support Services, Creighton University, Omaha

As a child, Audrianna endured tremendous challenges including racial discrimination. Rising above adversity, she resolved to go to college and make a better life for herself. As a student at Creighton University, Audrianna is studying criminal justice with future plans to join the Peace Corp and eventually earn a law degree.

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**Whitney Johnson**, Bellevue

Referred by Central Plains Center for Services, Broken Bow

At an early age, Whitney Johnson had to learn to care for herself and her brother due to serious family issues. Despite those challenges, she excelled in school and now studies neuroscience and psychology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her dream is to work in a research lab dealing with microbiology and neurobiology.

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**Nyabiel Mayian**, Omaha

Referred by Project Achieve, University of Nebraska at Omaha

After enduring civil war in Sudan, Nyabiel helped her family survive in an Ethiopian refugee camp until they relocated to the United States. Despite knowing little English, Nyabiel graduated from high school at the top half of her class and is now studying business administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

**Fardosa Mumin**, Omaha  
Referred by Lutheran Family Services, Omaha

After fleeing war in Somalia, Fardosa's family settled in a refugee camp. Although conditions were hard, she was able to finish high school and eventually made her way to Omaha. She will attend Metropolitan Community College this fall with plans to become a nurse. Her mission is to become an advocate for immigrants and refugees.

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**Sarah Payich**, Omaha  
Referred by EducationQuest Foundation, Omaha

Despite many hardships as a child, including caring for her mother who suffered from early-onset Alzheimer's disease, Sarah graduated high school with a 4.7 grade point average. She will attend the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a goal to become a pediatric physical therapist so that she can help hurting children grow stronger.

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**Maria Perez-Garcia**, West Point  
Referred by Project Achieve, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Because Maria is pursuing college against her father's wishes, she has to provide for her own living expenses and tuition. She works many hours, takes heavy class loads, and volunteers as a Spanish translator. She is striving for a criminal justice degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and hopes to eventually earn a law degree.

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**Amy Peters**, Scottsbluff  
Referred by Central Plains Center for Services, Broken Bow

Amy was bounced from one foster home to the next during her teens, yet found the resolve to excel in high school. Determined to continue her education, Amy attended Western Nebraska Community College and earned an associate degree. This fall, she will attend the University of Nebraska - Lincoln with a major in criminal justice.

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**Katherine Poage**, Wymore  
Referred by Upward Bound, Southeast Community College, Beatrice

Katherine had a traumatic childhood until she was placed in a foster home where she found stability along with the opportunity to set educational goals. She will attend the University of Nebraska at Omaha majoring in mathematics. Her goal is to become a lawyer and a published author.

**Michelle Therkildsen**, Omaha

Referred by Student Support Services, Creighton University, Omaha

At age 14, Michelle found herself alone in the world when her mother died. Heading in a self-destructive path, she resolved to turn her life around. Today she attends Creighton University majoring in social work. Her goal upon graduation is to earn a commission in the U.S. Army.

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**Jo Vostrez**, Beatrice

Referred by Student Support Services, Southeast Community College, Beatrice

As a mother of four grown children, Jo used all her courage to make difficult, yet positive life changes. She earned an associate degree in business from Southeast Community College in Beatrice and is continuing her education at Peru State College where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

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**James Weese**, Grand Island

Referred by Student Support Services, University of Nebraska at Kearney

Choosing not to follow in the path of his dysfunctional family, James became the first person in his family to graduate from high school. He is now pursuing a teaching degree at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Providing for himself since he was 15, James balances 18 credit hours and a job while tutoring his younger siblings.

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*Scholarship awards for three additional recipients are pending until the verification process is complete.*