SINA 12th Annual
REACH Awards Ceremony

Wednesday, June 6, 2018
5:00pm - 8:00pm

Trinity College
Washington Room in Mather Hall
300 Summit Street, Hartford, CT 06106
Program

Masters of Ceremonies

Steve Balcanoff  
Manager, Non-Medical Services  
Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

Katherine Ramirez  
Program Specialist  
Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

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Welcome

Jane Baird  
SINA Board Chair  
Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance

Melvyn Colón  
Executive Director  
Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance

Dickens Mathieu  
General Counsel and Secretary of the College  
Trinity College

Bimal Patel  
President  
Hartford Hospital

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Dinner

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Awards Presentation

SINA Student Support Scholarship  
Presented By: Joseph Barber, and Evadne Coache

SINA / Ivan A. Backer Scholarship  
Presented By: Katherine Ramirez, Elsa Huertas and Steve Balcanoff

Neighborhood Service Award  
Presented By: Mary Fattouh, Ana Alfaro with Nilda Fernandez, and Fernando Betancourt

Institutional Award  
Presented By: Peter Nagel

Chair’s Award — Special Recognition  
Presented By: Jane Baird

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Closing Remarks
The SINA / Ivan A. Backer Scholarship program was established in 1997 in honor of Ivan Backer, who served as president of SINA for nearly 20 years. The recipients are selected based on service to community, school, family, and academic achievement. The scholarship consists of three awards of $4,000 ($1,000 per year for 4 years) to Bulkeley High School seniors continuing their education at an accredited 4-year postsecondary program.

**2018 Scholarship Recipients**

**Nichali D. Bogues**
Jessica Chirdon, English teacher at Bulkeley High School, says “Nichali prides himself on his desire to do for others. He believes character is measured by a person’s ability to do what is morally just, and he lives his life by that standard.” Nichali will attend UConn’s Hartford campus to double major in structural biology/biophysics and mathematics/physics, with the goal of becoming a cardiologist.

**Mary A. Fattouh**
Helping people in the villages and communities of the third world, where residents lack adequate medical support, is Mary’s goal. She says “I plan to continue my education, becoming an MD/Ph.D. who can conduct ground-breaking research.” Mary will attend the University of Connecticut to major in allied health, which will put her on track for an advanced degree in diagnostic genetic sciences.

**Merceda C. McClain**
“An exceptionally capable, charismatic and enthusiastic student” is how Justin Taylor, who teaches history at Bulkeley High School, describes Merceda. He believes “her love of learning, capacity of critical thinking and strong dedication to her community make her an exceptional choice to receive a scholarship.” Merceda plans to attend the University of Connecticut at Storrs, where she will major in philosophy.

*From left to right: Merceda McClain, Nichali Bogues, and Mary Fattouh*
The SINA Student Support Scholarship program was established in 2012. The purpose of the program is to provide much needed financial support to students who are attending Capital Community College (CCC). One to four scholarships in the combined amount of $2,000 per year will be awarded annually to students on a full or part time basis, who reside in the 06106 or 06114 zip codes, and who have completed at least one semester of study.

Edward Ramirez has been living in Connecticut since 2013 and is a full-time student at Capitol Community College. He plans to transfer to Central Connecticut State University in order to obtain a bachelor's degree in accounting. Besides working full-time at a transportation company, Edward still finds time to volunteer at Hartford Youth Scholars. “Edward has been a great role model to our scholars. The fact that he is pursuing his college degree and working at the same time show dedication, resilience and a great work ethic”- Evadne Coache, Program Recruitment Manager at Hartford Youth Scholars.
Shantel Cameron

Shantel Cameron is a nursing program student at Capital Community College and she plans to become a midwife. Her three children inspire her and Shantel says “They keep me motivated during difficult financial times. I am determined to receive a good education so I can support them and provide them with more than I ever had.” In addition to attending school full-time, Shantel volunteers at Hartford Foundation and Community Renewal Team. “I am very grateful for the opportunities like the one your fund is providing to students. It reminds me that I am not alone on this journey to accomplish my educational goals.”
The Neighborhood Service Awards recognize individuals in the community who have made outstanding contributions to Hartford neighborhoods.

Yessica Amparo

“The youth are our future” is the mantra often repeated by Yessica Amparo, whose life is dedicated to educating and guiding young people. She fell in love with Hartford when she arrived as a 13 year old from the Dominican Republic, and has been an engaged community member ever since.

Her passion for her work as a Youth Development Specialist at Our Piece of the Pie is obvious when she talks about creating a healthy environment for these youth, to “give them a second chance.” Yessica brings in speakers as role models to show one can “come from nothing to make something
of themselves,” stating “these are our future leaders, and there is never enough to give them. Five minutes can make a big difference.”

Mary Fattouh, a student who works with Yessica, is in awe of her dedication. “She cares deeply, always providing an open ear. She provides troubled youth with work, opportunities and solutions. She finds multiple ways to not only involve, but to build and show off her students. To see her students succeeding is truly all she needs.”

Yessica explains “education is in my blood,” with a grandmother who was a school principal and two sisters who are teachers. Yessica herself holds multiple degrees from colleges in Connecticut and in Spain. She has worked with youth in schools in Manchester, Enfield, New Britain, Waterbury and East Hartford, as well as in Hartford and at OPP. Her many awards and volunteer activities revolve around her commitment to youth and education. Yessica cites her mother’s constant reminder, “education is something nobody can take away from you,” as her inspiration. This dedication to providing opportunity for our youth is the reason we are recognizing Yessica today.
Decades of community service mark Ilia Castro’s life. “This has been building in my heart forever,” she says, “ever since moving to Hartford from Puerto Rico in 1970 and being exposed to the women’s movement. I always liked dealing with women and my community. I can’t separate my passion from what I’m doing.” Her involvement has benefited Latinas in south Hartford in innumerable ways.

“Ilia has worked tirelessly for change,” says Nilda Fernandez, who nominated her. “A pioneer on multiple fronts, she acts to promote social, economic, educational and gender parities. Even in her retirement, Ilia continues to give of her time to those who are most vulnerable. Her recent efforts have focused on advocacy for people displaced by Hurricane Maria and for those unfairly impacted by unprecedented changes in immigration policy.”
Her current activity reflects Ilia’s inability to stand by when Hispanic women are hurting. She worked with Evelyn Mantilla to create a new advocacy group for women, a grass roots efforts to provide hot meals and stable housing for families impacted by Hurricane Maria. The group also teaches women about the political process and how to do things like organize marches, because Ilia explains, in the current political climate “we need to be talking about justice again.”

Ilia was formerly a state representative and also served as deputy director of the YWCA, where she managed a sexual assault prevention program and was social services director for a nine-town region. Ana Alfaro, another nominator, says “Ilia is a passionate advocate for women and children. Her community service and women empowerment is changing lives for many, especially for Latinas who reside in Frog Hollow.” That is why SINA is recognizing her with this award.
Story and Soil Coffee

The quirky coffee shop on Capitol Avenue opened in the summer of 2017 and quickly became a community gathering spot. It’s the first business venture for Sarah McCoy, husband Michael and their partner, Michael Acosta, three Hartford residents. Their diverse backgrounds blended into a shared vision of coffee quality and community building.

Having done much of the work on the space themselves, the partners paid special attention to welcoming details of furniture, art and music. According to Sarah, the shop provides “the great satisfaction of bringing people together, building community and contributing to the renaissance of the neighborhood. Visitors range from couples on first dates to city leaders in meetings.” She is pleased to provide a space where “micro-relationships are making a macro difference” in Hartford.
Neighbor Fernando Betancourt nominated the shop for the award in recognition of their community building and economic development efforts. “The friendly co-owners create an inviting environment. They contribute to economic development by buying from local farms and businesses. They’ve developed a unique space that enhances artistic options in the community, a space where you can listen to eclectic music, read a book, or simply meet friends.”

Michael Acosta says “we went into it to build community and celebrate culture. We had the vision for a space and a coffee program, and the rest is out of our hands. It has grown organically, as employees and customers make it their own. For me, coffee is a vehicle for good. My vision is using coffee and food to sustain community, bringing people together, and we have been blessed with amazing support.” SINA is pleased to recognize the big impact made by this small shop.
Hartford Hospital
Institutional Award

Each year SINA gives out an Institutional Award that recognizes and honors an employee from one of our three institutions. This individual goes beyond the call of duty and contributes significantly to the betterment of the Hartford neighborhoods.

Angel Ortiz

When a crisis struck, Angel Ortiz was ready and able to act. His caring personality, strong faith, calmness and decisiveness saved the life of his co-worker. As his supervisor Peter Nagel says “Angel is a super guy, very humble, truly the nicest person – and there is no doubt in the mind of anyone who was there that he saved this man’s life!”

As employees in Hartford HealthCare Laundry Services, Angel and his colleagues work in a separate building from the main hospital, on another part of the campus. Therefore, when an emergency occurs, they have to call
911 like anyone else. One day recently, a co-worker who’d been at the hospital for 30 years had an incident. Angel was standing nearby and caught him as he fell, then immediately started CPR. He continued while someone called 911, and didn’t stop until the paramedics arrived. Thanks to his efforts, his co-worker was back at work a week later.

Angel grew up in Brooklyn and moved to Puerto Rico as a teenager, where he worked in a convalescent home. He took advantage of free CPR training there because he was caring for his mother, who was ill for many years, and he wanted to be prepared. Angel later moved to Connecticut and worked at the Hartford Courant for before taking a job at the hospital.

In nearly 40 years since receiving the training Angel had never used CPR – until that day at work! Angel explains “I would do it for anyone, but it was a scary feeling. When I grabbed him, his eyes were on the other side and it didn’t look good. I was almost in tears, hoping he makes it, praying to the Lord and to my mother until the paramedics came in.” Peter says “I know CPR, but you wonder… I’d like to think we would all do that, but until it happens to you, you just don’t know.” Angel’s presence of mind, generous nature and courage to act are why we are recognizing him today with this award.
Chair's Award — Special Recognition

For his service as Chair of the Frog Hollow NRZ, his efforts to expand its membership, his advocacy for a connected city through a reimagined highway, and his contribution - as developer of a historic property - to attract tenants that contribute to the vitality and fun of Frog Hollow

Aaron Gill

Wearing multiple hats, and juggling them exceedingly well, is what Aaron Gill does for Frog Hollow. After moving here a decade ago for a job, Aaron and his wife fell in love with Hartford and became active in city life. They purchased a building on Capitol Avenue and spent over a year rehabbing it – while living there – before securing street level commercial tenants.

Nominator Jane Baird says “Aaron’s diligent efforts to secure the right tenants for his ground-floor commercial spaces paid off with Story and Soil, a coffee shop that has become a real community gathering space.” Aaron says he and his wife were “looking for concepts that would add vibrancy to the neighborhood.” They generated a “top five list” of
possible types of commercial tenants, two of which were coffee and ice cream shops – dream achieved!

Aaron’s passion for urban planning, historic buildings and community engagement led him to attend public hearings about the rebuilding of Interstate 84 in their neighborhood. A civil engineer by training, Aaron explains he had “long studied and understood the detrimental impact highways have on city neighborhoods,” so he recognized an opportunity to fix problems. In his official role as the Frog Hollow NRZ rep, he was able to push back on DOT’s assumptions. The new highway configuration has been influenced by Aaron’s advocacy.

Under Aaron’s leadership, says Baird, “the NRZ has expanded to include residents from all parts of the neighborhood and to have a role in important projects like relocating the Park Street branch of the library to the site of the Lyric Theater. Aaron stepped up to NRZ leadership despite having a full time job as an engineer, a part time job as a developer, and a volunteer commitment on the Planning and Zoning Commission.” Yet Aaron believes he is simply building on the foundation others have created, saying he has “a ton of respect for SINA and its work. This award is not anything I ever expected. It never feels like I’m doing enough.” His wide-ranging contributions are the reason we are recognizing Aaron today with a special award.
REACH Committee

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Nilda Fernandez
UConn Health / Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

Elsa Huertas
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*Executive Committee Member
REACH is sponsored by SINA and its member institutions:
Trinity College,
Connecticut Children’s Medical Center,
and Hartford Hospital

The REACH Committee’s mission is to develop, support and recognize individuals who positively contribute to the growth of the Hartford Community.

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