

Scholarship: General Woman's Club awards funds for college to single mothers

May 27, 2015

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The General Woman's Club of Lehigh Acres has handed out scholarships for more than 30 years to the tune of more than \$82,000. That's according to Diane Lashua, who was the chairman of the group who selected the recipients.

And this year was no exception as the club handed out scholarships to seven single moms who are going back to college to further their education in hopes of getting better jobs and a bigger pay check.

Members handed out the seven \$500 scholarships at their May luncheon for the 2015 academic year.



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN

The General Woman's Club of Lehigh Acres awarded seven \$500 scholarships at a luncheon meeting on May 15. The recipients were: Blanca Barrios, FGCU; Carla Rosier, Hodges University; Jessica Rojas, Keiser University; Karissa Thibeault, Keiser University; Felicia Waybright, Fort Myers Institute of Technology; Jennifer Hammer, Southern Technical College; and Deborah Johnson, Southern Technical College.

Those who received scholarships included:

- Blanca Barrios, who has two children and is attending FGCU. She is enrolled in the education field and is taking full-time classes and will receive a bachelor of science in education degree next year.
- Carla Rossier has a son, 14, and is attending Hodges University. She is working toward a master's of science degree in clinical mental health counseling and is also employed full-time with Lee County Public Safety EMS for the past eight years working in the billing department.
- Jessica Rojas has three children and attends Keiser University. She is working toward a bachelor's degree in psychology and will graduate in November of this year. Her goal is to get her master's degree and work in a substance abuse facility.

- Karissa Thibeault has two daughters, four and two years of age. She attends Keiser University and is working to get her bachelor's degree in accounting. She also works full-time.

- Felicia Waybright has a four-year-old son and attends Fort Myers Institute of Technology. She wants to become a certified welder. Her goal is to be self-sufficient and provide a stable home environment for her son.

- Jennifer Hammer has two children and attends Southern Technical College. She is working on her associates degree and also has a part-time job in a medical supply office.

- Deborah John has four children of which two are minor children. She attends Southern Technical College. And is working on getting her bachelor's degree in the architectural and interior design program and will graduate in June of 2016.

Those who served on the Scholarship Committee for the club included Diane Lashua, chairman, working with Deborah Murphy, Martha Daigler, Maralyn Waline and Jeanne Savaria.

Lashua said that prior to 2009, scholarships were given out to high school graduates only.

She said it was at that time when four to five scholarships were given out each year with some years as much as \$1,000 per award.

Lashua said that in 2009, the decision was made to grant scholarships to single parents who were working on their college educations and had minor children to support at home.

Several fundraisers are held throughout the year to go toward the funding of scholarships.

The largest fundraiser is the fashion show held each spring.

It draws more than 160 local residents.

Lashua said those who attend enjoy checking out the latest fashions as well as enjoying lunch with raffles being offered throughout the event.

The club also holds an annual card party, a silent auction, a book sale and several other event throughout the year to raise money, not only for the scholarship awards, but also to donate money to other local charities in Lehigh.

Lashua said that all the money raised by the club stays in Lehigh Acres.

Also, the club collects soda tabs for the Ronald McDonald House and it collects manufacturer's coupons for veterans in the area. They also collect can goods during the holidays and give the food to Lehigh Community Services in Lehigh. They also ask people for their older eye glasses which are given to the Lion's Club. They also give funds to Hope Hospice and Community Services.

With several members now, the General Woman's Club of Lehigh Acres began in January of 1961.

Lashua said their theme is "Working and Serving Together."