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**LAFCU WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS
PURSUE COLLEGE EDUCATION TO ADVANCE CAREERS**

*WHEEL program awards \$3,000 in scholarships
to encourage women to seek needed career education*

LANSING, Mich. — The three recipients of the 2015 LAFCU Women Helping Educate Every Lady (WHEEL) scholarships are all mothers – one will be a grandmother soon – and are keenly aware that a college education is needed in today's workforce environment. They put their education on hold for their families and have struggled because of the lack of a degree or career education. But now, it's their time.

The winners are Yvette Donahue, Holt; Elsa Gallegos, Lansing; and Michelle Cunningham, Owosso. Each received a \$1,000 scholarship to attend Lansing Community College (LCC) this fall.

"The women who received the WHEEL scholarships this year are inspiring, and demonstrate, once again, it's never too late to complete an academic degree," said Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU vice president of community and business development.

"These mothers of varying ages are juggling more complex lives than traditional college students. It's also difficult to find the resources to return to school for that second chance at preparing for a successful career. We are happy to help them financially, and hope their stories motivate others in similar situations."



LAFCU 2015 WHEEL –
LAFCU WHEEL scholarship recipients Elsa Gallegos, Lansing, and Michelle Cunningham, Owosso, center, display their winning essays. On hand at the presentation ceremony were, at left, LAFCU Vice President of Community and Business Development Kelli Ellsworth Etchison; second from right, Lansing Community College Foundation Executive Director Dan McKean; and LAFCU CEO Robin Frucci.

The mid-Michigan credit union created the WHEEL program to encourage women to pursue education that is needed to enter or re-enter the workforce or to advance their careers.

Donahue is pursuing an education degree. She became a stay-at-home mom after the birth of her third child. When that child entered kindergarten, she turned to LCC to prepare her to reenter the workforce.

“Two surgeries have delayed my progress at college,” Donahue said. “But, they’ve also helped me realize that I may have physical limitations in the future, and I’ve been able to change my career focus to one that will work for me if I do have limited physical abilities.

“Thank you, LAFUCU. The scholarship is extremely helpful to my pursuit of financial stability.”

Gallegos is pursuing an associate degree in business with a focus in computer programming. When the mother of six looked to replace the job she lost in 2013—most of her kids were adults at the time, she found that not having a college degree was a major detriment.

“I had the qualifications, but not a degree,” she said. “I eventually got a job, but realized I’ll need a degree to advance. I have been attending LCC part time since then. I’m thankful for this scholarship. It will pay-off a portion of my student loans and allow me to focus on the task at hand – that is continue to move forward and complete my degree.”

Cunningham was so inspired when she first learned about the WHEEL scholarship program that she decided to return to LCC to complete an associate degree she started 29 years ago—with or without the scholarship. Instead of continuing her course of study in elementary music education, she will focus on data analytics and its applications to lean warehouse and supply chain management, and Spanish.

After the self-professed “soccer mom” and her husband raised three children, her husband was downsized out of a career position, and Michelle became the primary breadwinner. She recently accepted a new job working with many young adults who have grown up with computer technology and have college degrees.



LAFUCU 2015 WHEEL 2 –

Yvette Donahue, Holt, mother of three, displays her winning essay for LAFUCU’s WHEEL scholarship contest. She is using the \$1,000 award to pursue a degree in education at LCC.

“I have worked diligently to be proficient in new technology, but I know there’s a lot more to learn,” the soon-to-be grandmother said. “Part of my job is supporting company sales in Mexico, in which I interact with many Spanish-speaking people. Learning the language will be beneficial to me and my company. I appreciate the scholarship, but am even more grateful for the ‘push’ I needed to return to college to reach my goal of earning a degree.”

Winners were determined by a one-page essay each woman submitted about her career choice, why she wants to pursue it now and her inspiration for returning to school.

To be eligible, applicants had to live or work in LAFCU’s service area, which includes the counties of Barry, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Livingston, Montcalm and Shiawassee.

The WHEEL program along with several other scholarship programs support the credit union’s long-standing ‘people helping people’ mission. LAFCU and its employees also assist dozens of community organizations through donations and volunteer time.

About LAFCU

Chartered in 1936, LAFCU is proud to be mid-Michigan’s credit union, serving the counties of Barry, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Livingston, Montcalm and Shiawassee. A recipient of the Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Award, LAFCU takes pride in bringing value to the financial lives of its members, neighbors, families and community. Offering a comprehensive range of personal and business financial products, LAFCU provides services that include checking and savings accounts, auto and mortgage lending, business accounts and business lending. LAFCU serves nearly 60,000 members, holds nearly \$600 million in assets, and maintains nine locations throughout Greater Lansing and Shiawassee County. Anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in its designated counties is eligible to join. Members enjoy benefits, such as lower interest rates on loans, higher yields on savings, insurance discounts, preferred seating for LAFCU-sponsored events, and access to 28,000 surcharge-free ATMs through the CO-OP ATM network. LAFCU supports and enriches mid-Michigan by donating funds and employee volunteer hours to many organizations and causes. To learn more about LAFCU, please call 517.622.6600 or find us online:

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