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HELPING HEALERS

Desert Valley awards \$100,000 in scholarships to future doctors, nurses

**BY BROOKE EDWARDS AND KRISTINE MCGOWAN
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VICTORVILLE • The same day Ryan Rodriguez found out state budget cuts had cost him \$6,000 in grants from the University of California, Irvine for the coming school year, he got a welcome bit of good news.

Rodriguez, who aims to become a combat rescuer with the U.S. Air Force, learned he's one of 58 local students to receive between \$1,000 and \$5,000 in scholarships through the Desert Valley Charitable Foundation.

"I'm still going to have to take out some loans, but this is going to help a lot," Rodriguez, 18, said hours before the awards ceremony started Wednesday night at the Victorville Conference Center.

Desert Valley Hospital's foundation awards \$100,000 in scholarships each year to local students pursuing a medical or health-care career. The amount each recipient received this year was based on the student's financial situation and which school he or she attends, according to Jana Bullock, director of the foundation.

For 28-year-old Nathalia Gil, the scholarship will help her continue in her goal to become a registered nurse through Victor Valley College by 2013.

"You get to touch people's lives when they're in their worst moments," Gil said of her chosen career.

Gil has been in the VVC program for four years now, studying while she also works full-time as an emergency room technician at Desert Valley Hospital. She received a \$2,000 scholarship from the hospital's foundation last year, which covered her entire tuition and books.

"I want to come back and support my community," scholarship recipient Rebecca Molina said, hoping to land a job at a local hospital.

Molina, 22, graduated from Apple Valley High School in 2007 and is about to start her senior year at California State University, San Bernardino. As she completes her bachelor's degree in nutrition and food science, she has also been volunteering through Desert Valley's Charitable Foundation to serve local needy senior citizens.

Next she plans to pursue a masters degree to become a physician's assistant and then return to work in the Victor Valley, where she said too many fast food restaurants, high temperatures and streets unfriendly to walkers are among impediments to healthy lifestyles.

"It's pretty tough in the beginning," Molina said, offering advice for those beginning to pursue medical careers. "It takes a lot of work and motivation. But once you get through that and get



into your specialty field, it's really fun and really exciting to know that you're doing what you actually want to do."



JAMES QUIGG, DAILY PRESS

SCHOLARSHIPS: Desert Valley Charitable Foundation Scholarship recipients walk through a receiving line as they are presented scholarship certificates. The foundation gave out more than \$100,000 worth of scholarships to students from the High Desert pursuing health-care related education.

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