

# REACHINGOut

A Newsletter of the Reaching Your Potential Scholarship Program

## RECIPIENT profile

Nybol Akok plans to use her education to help empower Sudanese women.



Nybol Akok and EducationQuest Scholarship Coordinator Lisa Mueller spend some time together on the UNL campus.



*"... my advice is never give up on your studies – keep pushing hard ..."*

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**W**hile growing up in North Sudan, Nybol Akok faced discrimination due to her Christian beliefs, endured the loss of her mother, and was separated from her father and siblings until she could join them at age 18. In 2001, the family fled to Egypt after life became too insecure due to civil war in the Sudan. In 2003, the family resettled in the United States as refugees and Nybol could finally focus on her dream of pursuing higher education. Three years later, Nybol faced another tragedy when her father died.

Now responsible for caring for five nieces, Nybol has not let any of these challenges keep her from her college dreams. She graduated from Southeast Community College (SCC) in Lincoln in June 2010 and transferred to the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL). She explains how she made college possible and how she plans to use her education to help empower Sudanese women.

### While growing up in Sudan, what were your dreams for the future?

Since I was a young girl, my dream was to get a higher education even beyond college. My father instilled the importance of education in us. My family called me "Doctor Nybol" and that is still my dream – to get my doctorate.

### After you arrived in the United States, your father died and you started caring for your nieces. How did you make college happen?

My brother helps me with my five nieces. They are all in school and we have the same schedule, so that helps. My nieces and I have sacrificed for our goal to get an education because we know it is a vital key to our lives.

### You graduated from SCC through their academic transfer program and transferred to UNL in August 2010. What were the benefits of the academic transfer program?

SCC has small classes so the teachers know every student in class and pay close attention to immigrant students. Also, SCC has lower costs so every student can afford to go there.

### What is your major at UNL? When do you plan to graduate?

My major is political science and I minor in sociology. I hope to graduate in December 2012.

*Continued on page 2.*

*Above: Nybol studying at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln student union.*

## Tips for a successful academic transfer

Nybol Akok is one of many *Reaching Your Potential* recipients who started their college careers at a community college and then successfully transferred to a four-year college. If you plan to do the same, follow these tips to make it a smooth process:

- **Determine your aspirations and goals** when you begin your community college experience. Carefully consider the area of study you want to pursue and plan ahead for a bachelor's or even a master's degree.
- **If you haven't decided on a major**, take prescribed classes in the Academic Transfer Program.
- **Seek excellent academic advising.** Confirm with your advisor that your community college courses will transfer. Discuss GPA (grade point average) requirements at your transfer college.
- **Research "transfer guides"** on the websites of your community college and your transfer college.
- **Ask a lot of questions from your current college and the transfer college.** You are ultimately responsible for making sure your credits transfer!

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Recipient Profile *continued, from page 1*

### What advice do you have for students who have emigrated from other countries and face language and cultural obstacles?

Immigrant students may have to study twice as hard so my advice is never give up on your studies – keep pushing hard until you get it. Ask your professors for help. Complete your assignments before they are due, and ask someone to proof your papers. Get help from the writing center or from a friend.

### What are your plans for the future?

My future plans are to get married and have a family, get a doctorate in international human rights or women's rights, write a book dedicated to my late mother and father's memories, and become a women's activist in the Republic of South Sudan.

## Registration Reminder College Access Symposium is March 27!

Community agency representatives...if you haven't already, it's time to register for EducationQuest Foundation's *College Access Symposium*! This **free** event is Tuesday, March 27 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It will feature general college access sessions along with breakout sessions designed for agency representatives.

Here are a few of the session topics:

- Financial Aid 101
- How high schools and community agencies can work together to ensure college access
- *KnowHow2GO* activities for 8th, 9th and 10th grade students
- College access activities for Hispanic students and families
- Involving families in the college planning process
- Helping adult learners get on the path to college

Please note that the *Symposium* replaces the *College Access Training* EducationQuest previously conducted for community agencies.

*Symposium* details and registration are available in the "Agency Professionals" section at [EducationQuest.org](http://EducationQuest.org).

We encourage you to register early as seating is limited!

**Questions? Contact:** Treve Florom  
Director of Outreach Services  
800.303.3745, ext. 6653 or  
[trevef@educationquest.org](mailto:trevef@educationquest.org)

## EducationQuest **CARES** for you!



EducationQuest recently sent "care packages" to all *Reaching Your Potential* recipients. We hope the hot chocolate, popcorn, gum, licorice, trail mix, and cereal bar will come in handy during your long hours of studying!

# Call for Nominations!

Submit your nominations for

## CAMPUS MENTOR OF THE YEAR



To honor the many campus mentors involved in the *Reaching Your Potential* program, EducationQuest has created the *Campus Mentor of the Year* award.

EducationQuest encourages you to nominate your *Reaching Your Potential* campus mentor for this award if that person has positively impacted your college experience. If your nominee is selected, he or she will receive a \$100 gift card – and you will receive a \$50 gift card!

Following are all the details:

- Email your nomination to [lisam@educationquest.org](mailto:lisam@educationquest.org) by March 21. Include a paragraph explaining why your *Reaching Your Potential* mentor should be selected as *Campus Mentor of the Year*.
- EducationQuest will select the *Campus Mentor of the Year* in April.
- EducationQuest scholarship staff will travel to the winner's campus this spring to present the *Campus Mentor of the Year* with a \$100 gift card and a plaque. The nominating student will receive a \$50 gift card.
- The 2012 *Mentor of the Year* and nominating students will be highlighted in the Summer 2012 issue of *Reaching Out*.
- Don't miss this opportunity to thank your *Reaching Your Potential* campus mentor for helping you succeed in college!

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Above: Donna Berge (left) from Western Nebraska Community College was selected as last year's *Campus Mentor of the Year*. She is pictured with Cynthia Wurdeman, the student who nominated her.

## It's FAFSA time!

EducationQuest has free online tools to help you complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Visit [EducationQuest.org](http://EducationQuest.org) and select "FAFSA Tools" to view our FAFSA Demo, FAFSA Checklist, FAFSA Tutorial and Steps to Renew Your FAFSA.

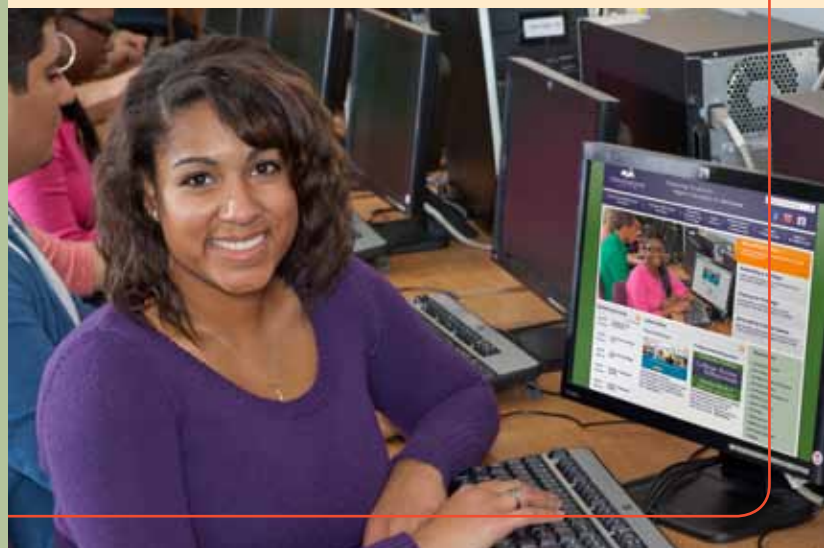
If you need additional help filing the FAFSA, contact the EducationQuest location nearest you.

**Kearney** 800-666-3721

**Lincoln** 800-303-3745

**Omaha** 888-357-6300

When you call our offices for an appointment, please identify yourself as a *Reaching Your Potential* recipient.



## Congratulations to our recent graduates!

**Lexi VanFleet** graduated from University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

**Najma Bashir** graduated from Metropolitan Community College with an academic transfer associate degree. She plans to continue her education and major in nursing at Clarkson College.

*There are dreamers  
and there are planners;  
the planners make their  
dreams come true.*

# Reaching Your Potential Scholarship Recipients

Fall 2011



**Emina Becirovic, Omaha**

Attending Creighton University  
Referred by Student Support Services, Creighton University

Emina's family relocated to the United States from a village in Bosnia when she was 10 years old. Despite experiencing poverty and genocide in her native country, she is a hopeful person and is working toward her dream of becoming a doctor. She is studying biology/pre-medicine at Creighton University.

**Tammi J. Preston Scholar\***

**Bridget Holman, Lincoln**

Attending Southeast Community College, Lincoln  
Referred by Central Plains Center for Services, Lincoln

Bridget's experiences in foster care provided her with self-confidence, tolerance, and the determination to become the first in her family to graduate from college. She is now pursuing a degree at Southeast Community College in Lincoln with a goal of becoming a dental hygienist.



**Phuong (Angel) Le, Omaha**

Attending Creighton University  
Referred by Student Support Services, Creighton University

After moving from Vietnam to the United States with her mother, Angel had a difficult time adjusting to her new country's culture and lifestyle. With hard work, Angel has increased her language proficiency and gained confidence with her communication skills. She is now pursuing a nursing degree at Creighton University.

**Christopher Madden, Omaha**

Attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Referred by Project Achieve, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Struggles throughout Christopher's life gave him the desire and determination to improve his situation and show his children how to live a happy, fulfilling life. With the help of the TRIO program, Christopher earned an associate degree and is now majoring in biology at University of Nebraska at Omaha. He plans to eventually pursue a master's degree.



**Nidal Ali Mohamed, Lincoln**

Attending Bellevue University  
Referred by Student Support Services, Southeast Community College, Lincoln

Nidal's dream to pursue college brought her to the United States from Sudan. Despite a language barrier, she received an associate degree in computer information technology from Southeast Community College in Lincoln. She is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in network and systems management from Bellevue University.

\*For each *Reaching Your Potential* selection cycle, EducationQuest designates the top-qualifying recipient as the *Tammi J. Preston Scholar*. This is in honor of EducationQuest's former Director of Outreach Services who passed away in February 2011.



### Loan Nguyen, Lincoln

Attending Southeast Community College, Lincoln  
 Referred by Student Support Services, Southeast Community College, Lincoln

After Loan moved to the United States from Vietnam to join her father, a series of unfortunate events forced her to leave her home and live independently. Loan believes this adversity motivated her to learn more quickly – a skill that is serving her well at Southeast Community College in Lincoln where she majors in English.

### Rose Ogolla, Papillion

Attending Metropolitan Community College, Omaha  
 Referred by Student Support Services, Metropolitan Community College

Growing up in Sudan, Rose was determined to get an education. Despite encountering obstacles, she managed to graduate from high school and then pursued an opportunity to attend college in the United States. She is currently working toward a nursing degree at Metropolitan Community College with plans to transfer to a four-year college.



### Elizabeth Proksel, Omaha

Attending College of Saint Mary, Omaha  
 Referred by College of Saint Mary

Elizabeth's life took a positive turn when she discovered that providing for her child gave her the courage to better her life and enroll in college. Supporting herself, she has learned the importance of budgeting every penny and appreciating everything she has. Elizabeth attends College of Saint Mary and is majoring in special education.

### Eduardo Vazquez, Omaha

Attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha  
 Referred by Project Achieve, University of Nebraska at Omaha

When he was 14 years old, Eduardo and his family left Mexico to come to the United States. With English as his second language, Eduardo worked hard to gain confidence with his communication skills. With his improved English, he is experiencing success at the University of Nebraska at Omaha where he studies civil engineering.



### Stephen Waters, Omaha

Attending Creighton University  
 Referred by Student Support Services, Creighton University

After losing his father at a young age and facing a series of struggles, Stephen's traumatic childhood took a positive turn when he made the decision to enroll in college. He is now studying organizational communication and pre-law at Creighton University.

# Reaching Your Potential REFERRALS DUE MARCH 16



If you know of students who may qualify for a *Reaching Your Potential* scholarship, refer them to the program by **March 16, 2012**. Details and referral forms are available in the "Agency Professionals" and "College Professionals" sections at [EducationQuest.org](http://EducationQuest.org).



EducationQuest Foundation  
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## Reaching for the stars

**Danielle Turner** was selected as a Summer Preview Executive for Creighton University's New Student Orientation. She is majoring in Spanish and secondary education.

**Amy Peters** interned for Congress this past summer. Her internship involved working in a congressional office in the House of Representatives, along with the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. In addition, she, along with 14 other interns, put together a briefing and wrote a report for Congress, "The Future of Foster Care: A Revolution for Change." Amy attends University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is majoring in criminal justice.

**James Weese** was accepted into the Kappa Mu Epsilon National Mathematics Honor Society. James attends the University of Nebraska at Kearney and majors in elementary and math education.

**Audri Edmonds** will be a foreign exchange student in Morocco at the Al-Akhawayn University for the Spring 2012 semester. She attends Creighton University and majors in justice and society.

**Anissa Drake** was nominated this past summer to the International Scholar Laureate Program and went to Australia with their delegation for nursing. Anissa attends the University of Nebraska Medical Center and majors in nursing.

**Rebecca Bell** was inducted to the Delta Mu Delta Honor Society at Chadron State College. She is majoring in accounting.

**Deanna Wilson** was elected President of Pi Theta Kappa Honor Society and is editor for Emerging Voices. She attends Western Nebraska Community College and majors in health information and technology.

**Denisha Seals** received the Above & Beyond Award from the Susan Thompson Buffet Foundation. She received this honor for community service hours. Denisha attends the University of Nebraska at Omaha and majors in interdisciplinary studies.

## Please SHARE...

To share an academic or personal accomplishment in our *Reaching for the stars* article contact either Lisa Mueller or Maggie Nelson.



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You can also find Lisa and Maggie on Facebook.

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