

# The Phillips Scholar

## *The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund*

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The Stephen Phillips  
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*The Staff (from the left):  
Kate Gearan, Pamela  
Constantine and Karen  
and Arthur Emery.*

*Phillips Scholars are known for their desire to make a positive impact on their world. This issue of our newsletter highlights the work of three scholars who typify this commitment to service: Sarah Brickley, Vianna Alcantara, and Molly Quinion, who are serving others through Teach for America, Let's Get Ready in Lawrence, and the Forest Foundation. We also talked to Kate LaChance, a Phillips Scholar who is working at the Phillips House Museum.*

*Sarah Brickley*



When I applied to Teach for America during my senior year of college, I thought I knew about educational inequality. I had tutored in public elementary schools during my four years at NYU and had often been dismayed at the shortage of supplies and students' lack of motivation. As it turns out, I had only seen the tip of the iceberg. During the past year, being part of the Teach for America program has opened my eyes and my mind.

During the fall of my senior year at NYU, I was contacted by several alumni of Teach for America, an organization that recruits top college grads to teach in hard-to-staff schools for two years. Their heart-wrenching stories inspired me to follow in their footsteps. After surviving an extensive application and interview process, I was thrilled to find out that I would be teaching elementary school in New York City.

I'd no sooner tossed my graduation cap than I was back in the classroom. Over the summer, 500 other NYC corps members and I went through a crash-course in teaching. We taught summer school in the morning, attended workshops in the afternoon, and lesson planned late into the night. Today, my days aren't very different. On Saturdays, I attend grad school at Lehman College, where I'll eventually earn a Master's Degree in Education. The rest of my week is dedicated to Class 355, my third grade bilingual, special education inclusion class. I spend countless hours planning lessons in English and in Spanish, readying students for their first experience with standardized testing. It's a struggle, especially because nearly half my students have diagnosed learning disabilities. Some are so severe that children struggle to remember the alphabet when they should be reading chapter books. Nevertheless, we push on, practicing multiplication tables, writing poetry, locating the seven continents.

But for every moment I spend teaching, I spend equally as long meeting students' other needs. Most of my students are recent immigrants whose families struggle to stay above the poverty line. I bargain-hunt supplies for the students who can't afford the requisite 99-cent notebooks. I check in on the single mom

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with eight children who is battling cancer. I track down students whose families have been moved to yet another homeless shelter. No, this is not exactly what I had imagined when I decided to be a teacher. Yes, I could teach where students have stable homes and can afford as many notebooks and pencils as they want. But that's not where I'm needed. I'm happy to work where I can serve most fully, on the frontlines of the war on poverty, battling illiteracy and apathy, arming my students with knowledge.

### *Vianna Alcantara*

Let's Get Ready is a national, wholly student-run program in multiple cities that brings college student volunteers together with under-served high school students to help them prepare for college. The Lawrence, Massachusetts, program has grown tremendously in its first three years, and Phillips Scholar **Vianna Alcantara** (Dennison 2009) has served as Assistant and then Site Director the last two years. Having heard about the program through the Stephen Phillips Scholarship Fund, Vianna thought the program sounded extraordinary and applied for the job. That first summer, she says "made a huge impact on my life as I was starting to discover that helping others like me go to college was a passion I wanted to pursue." The program provides SAT and college prep courses during the summer, as well as offering guidance to students and their families about the whole college search process. According to Vianna, who grew up in Lawrence, "LGR has made a huge impact on the Lawrence community, with unprecedented numbers of Lawrence students going to college, some to prestigious four-year institutions." She feels that there is a remarkable commitment to LGR by the high school students who participate as well as a tremendous enthusiasm for it. When this enthusiasm is combined with the high level of effort from the volunteers, who consistently go above and beyond the expectations for them, the result is a terrific success.



When she first started to work at LGR, Vianna was surprised that all documentation provided to the students and their families was in English, even though most parents spoke Spanish. Vianna proposed that materials be offered in both languages, and was promptly charged with making that happen. Although she is a Spanish speaker, she was concerned about translating legal documents herself, and so found a professional translator to do it. She leaves a very real legacy behind in those bilingual documents.

As Site Director her second year, Vianna had to deal with the effects of the program's success (twice as many students to serve) while simultaneously facing a drastic 50% budget decrease. Although it proved to be difficult, they managed to get through. Vianna has also introduced students to the important role of scholarships to the financial aid process, inviting Kate Gearan from the Phillips Scholarship to speak on that topic.

Although Vianna is unsure about her career path in the future, she has grown interested in the education field, and hopes to pursue her new passion for helping underserved students go to and get through college.

### *Molly Quinion*

Forest Foundation has been granting funds to nonprofits in Essex County Massachusetts since 1995 and typically supports agencies with budgets under \$750,000 whose missions target women, children, and families in areas of hunger, education, housing, homelessness, and personal development. In an effort to expose students to philanthropy, the foundation also underwrites paid summer internships for college students with a variety of nonprofits in Essex County. Working with the Phillips Scholarship the past three summers to offer these opportunities to current Scholars, the Forest Foundation has to date provided thirteen paid summer internships at \$3,500 each to Phillips Scholars, 40% of the total positions. Molly Quinion, (Gordon College 2010), is one of those students.

The summer of 2008, Molly interned with Beverly Bootstraps Community Services, Inc., and with Forest Foundation, where she assisted Executive Director David Sullivan with the internship program as well as a few research projects. At the end of that summer, she was asked to stay on with Forest Foundation as Program Coordinator for the 2009 internship program. "I was thrilled and accepted the position," she says.

Molly's responsibilities currently include performing relevant research, establishing strong contacts with area

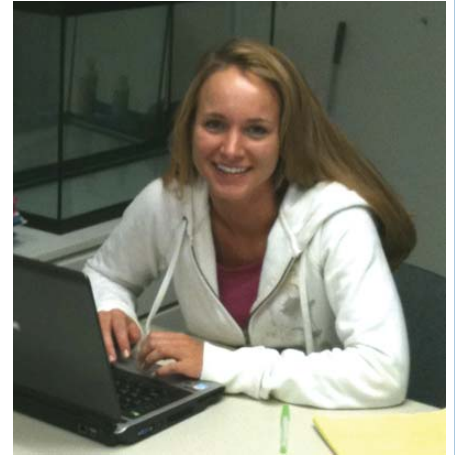
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colleges to market the internships, and building relationships with potential host agencies to plan a substantial educational experience. She is part of the interview and intern selection process as well. “During the summer I worked to ensure that interns and host agencies each benefit from this program and to troubleshoot the inevitable miscommunications and mishaps. Late summer and fall consisted of evaluating the internships just concluded and preparing for another exciting round the following year.”

Each intern’s experience is unique to the host agency with whom the intern is matched. During summer 2009, one intern was doing community organizing in Lawrence, another worked in various capacities at a rape crisis center in Lynn, and still another helped to create partnerships in the community to foster sustainable environmental health. Part of the application process includes identifying the intern’s interests and learning objectives, then matching these goals with an appropriate host agency.

Molly reports that, “as a result of my experiences at Forest Foundation, I have been able to sit in on Board meetings and hear how the grant proposals are discussed. I have been pleasantly surprised by the personal knowledge Board Members have of these nonprofits, their honest evaluation of each program, and their dedication to fund in ways that encourage sustainability within the nonprofit itself. As a social work and sociology double major, I found it rewarding to visit the interns at their respective internship sites to see the exciting work they do. There are so many things you just cannot learn in the classroom, which is why these internships are so valuable.” As far as career aspirations, her eyes have really been opened to what is possible. “There are so many nonprofits doing great work right here in Essex County supporting at risk individuals and populations in various ways—an area of work I hope to be involved in upon graduation.”



### *A Scholar at the Phillips House*



In addition to establishing the scholarship, the Phillips family also created a museum at the family home in Salem, Massachusetts. With ownership transferred to Historic New England in 2006, the Phillips House offers more than just a stunning example of Colonial Revival architecture: there are artifacts from around the world, stories about the family members and wonderful carriages and antique automobiles in the carriage house. An upstairs/downstairs presentation interpreted as the house would have been in 1919, the tour includes the grander public living spaces and family bedrooms as well as the kitchen and other staff areas.

In an interesting twist this summer, history major and Phillips Scholar **Kate LaChance** (Providence College, '09) is working as a tour guide at the Phillips House, having found the job posted on a website of museum job opportunities. Once hired, she read through material about the house and family, the objects, cars and carriages, referred to blueprints, and learned more about the Colonial Revival style and Salem

in general in order to create the tour that she would give, tweaking it each time to meet the interests of the visitors. Hard-pressed to identify one particular room as her favorite, Kate does like the impressive gothic bookcase in the library, but also the simplicity of the staff bedroom on the third floor with the scuff marks on the floor where the iron bed was, and what the staff areas suggest about their lives there.

On a typical day, Kate may open the museum, performing a list of tasks to prepare for the coming day. A rotating chore list for the guides ensures that the house is well maintained. The museum then opens for visitors from 11:00 to 4:00, with tours on the half hours. Dealing with visitors who are “touchers and wanderers” keeps her on her toes, as does the need to not feel so comfortable with the surroundings herself that she inadvertently leans on a wall or piece of furniture. She has learned more about the lives of the Phillips family and their philanthropy and their unusual Hawaiian connection, which leads the museum to fly the Hawaiian state flag. (To learn why, and to learn more about the Phillips House, visit [www.PhillipsHouse@HistoricNewEngland.org](http://www.PhillipsHouse@HistoricNewEngland.org).)

All in all, says Kate, it has been an interesting first foray into the world of being a museum curator, one of the many interests she developed during her time at Providence College. “I enjoy working in an environment where everyone shares an excitement for exploring our history.”

## *Keeping in Touch with Alumni*

So many Phillips Scholars are engaged in the same kinds of activities as the ones highlighted in this issue. We love to hear from you about what you are doing, and, in some cases, as with Let's Get Ready and the Forest Foundation, we are able to put organizations looking for interns in touch with Scholars. We encourage alumni to keep in touch with us by updating your addresses and emails. There is a very quick on-line form on the website for that ([www.phillips-scholarship.org/updateform.htm](http://www.phillips-scholarship.org/updateform.htm)), or you can just email us with any changes.

### *2009-2010 Alumni Scholar: Michael Astuccio*



The Phillips Scholar Alumni Award was established in 2003 to recognize one new scholarship recipient in particular who has exhibited strong involvement in his or her community as well as meeting our financial need and academic standards. The Trustees are very pleased to award a \$6,000 scholarship to Michael Astuccio of Salisbury, MA, a first year student at Stonehill College.

Michael Astuccio was very involved in the life of Triton Regional High School. According to his guidance counselor, "Mike truly embodies a 'sense of other' in word and deed." Through the Community Service Club, he was able to participate in a number of service projects throughout his hometown and beyond and, through Student Council, helped to plan and organize various activities for the school. He also volunteered in a Transitional Learning Center with intellectually impaired students his senior year. As a member of the National Honors Society from sophomore year on, and its president his senior year, Mike had even more opportunities to make a positive impact on his school community. In addition, Mike was trained as a leader in the peer mediation program at Triton, where he also participated in the Ignite Mentoring Program.

A well-rounded honor student, Mike was both an athlete and a member of the Triton Marching, Concert and Jazz Bands. He participated in Cross Country and both Indoor and Outdoor Track, and was also Drum Major for the band for two years. Outside of school, he has worked as an instructional assistant in the Triton Regional School District Summer Program for two years and as a bus boy at a local inn. In addition, the past two summers he has led a recreation program for 100 campers at a week-long camp, where he demonstrated his abilities for and honed his interest in a career working with children as a teacher.

Many thanks go to all of the alumni of The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund who donated so generously to the Alumni Scholarship. A friend of the scholarship matches all donations dollar for dollar, which makes each contribution a significant gift. All monies raised were used toward Michael's award.

## *Words of Thanks*

The following Phillips Scholar Alumni have donated generously to the Phillips Scholarship Alumni Award during the past year. Matched dollar for dollar by a friend of the scholarship, these funds helped expand our ability to assist students with the soaring costs of education. A sincere thank you to all.

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†\*Judith Nowinski

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