

Paola Torices

North Park University | Chicago, IL

My name is Paola, and I am currently in my second year of college at North Park University. After facing dark moments, anxieties, and challenges, God has given me hope, strength not to give up, and has guided me in the pursuit of the wonderful plans and gifts He has for me. I received the Ronald Lee Sterner Scholarship, which has been an immense blessing for my family and me.

I am a Christian, Mexican, 19 years old, and an immigrant. My parents are divorced, and my two brothers and I live apart. I work in a restaurant, and I'm a dreamer, humble, and simple person, always ready to help others. I arrived in the United States over six years ago, but the last two have been the most challenging so far.

Before entering college, many people, including family members, told me that I couldn't do it due to my parents' economic situation and my immigrant status. At school, I felt excluded when it came to applying for scholarships and universities because I didn't know where to start. I spent months in depression, feeling lost and with no sense of direction in my life. I prayed to God to help me find my path.

Finally, a few days before the application deadlines, I took the leap and enrolled in a few universities in just two days. While I had a glimmer of hope, I wasn't entirely sure of anything. After nearly two months, I was accepted to North Park University with a scholarship, and shortly after, to other institutions. This brought me great happiness and renewed my hope.

Still, I wondered how I would pay for college since my parents' income couldn't cover all the expenses. I searched everywhere and asked many people for financial assistance, but I found nothing. It was then that Adrian Salinas from North Park University sent me the application for the Ronald Lee Sterner Scholarship.

This scholarship is allowing me to provide financial assistance to my parents and focus more on my studies, as I no longer have to look for an additional job to cover tuition. I am committed to managing my finances well and, in the future, no longer depend on my parents economically, and this scholarship will help me achieve that.

Furthermore, I want to share a bit more about my plans for the future. As I mentioned, my goal is to become a professional physical therapist. My dream is to provide physical therapy services to those who need it most, especially to those without access to health insurance or educational opportunities. I aspire to offer free or affordable services to people in situations similar to the ones I faced when I arrived in this country.

I know that, like me, many people have dreams and aspirations hindered by economic and social barriers. I want to be an agent of change in their lives, providing quality care and

opportunities to help them reach their goals. This scholarship not only relieves the financial burden but also motivates me to work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of others.

I am grateful to my parents for always trusting and supporting my decisions, to Adrian Salinas, North Park University, and Covenant Children's Ministry for making me feel included and for giving me the opportunity to pursue my goals. But, most importantly, I thank God for never leaving me alone and for sending each person and institution to help me.

Just as I have received support, I am determined to give back for the good of many people. My advice to others is never to give up and always pursue what they love, their dreams, their goals, regardless of what others may think. There will always be a way to move forward. Everything is possible if we have faith in God. After the darkness, you will find the light. God will never abandon us.

Once again, I deeply thank you for this incredible opportunity you have given me. You have not only changed my life but also inspired me to change the lives of others. I hope that my story can be a reminder for all of us that, despite difficulties, faith in God and determination will guide us to the light in the midst of darkness.

Thank you, and may God bless you!