

14 students honored with endowment scholarships

By Matt Sanders msanders@paducahsun.com--270.575.8659

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Cynthia Thomas needed to reduce her hours as a licensed practice nurse in order to pursue her dream to complete her college degree in nursing and become a registered nurse.

Thomas, 32, is raising two daughters and worried about how her college costs and working less would affect her family's finances.

That's why she appreciated being one of 14 scholarship recipients of the McCracken County Community Career Endowment Inc., who were recognized during a second annual scholarship reception Sunday afternoon in Paducah.

The scholarships are made possible through the endowment, established by the late Fred Paxton and his wife, Peggy, in January 2006.

The 14 students received a total of \$12,000. They were chosen based on grade point average, financial need, achievements and goals.

"I love caring for people and have had a lifelong dream of being a nurse," said Thomas, who has worked as an LPN for 4 years.

Thomas will complete her degree at West Kentucky Community & Technical College in May 2009. Her scholarship also has had a positive impact on her daughters — Del'teasia, 15, and Kiara, 7.

They already are thinking about their college and career goals.

Keynote speaker S.G. Carthell told the recipients that their scholarships give them the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives in and their community. Carthell is director of African-American student services and ethnic programs for Murray State University's Marvin D. Mills Multicultural Center, where he develops and implements programs to enhance the academic success and retention of multicultural students.

“Education allows you to open doors and allows you to do what you want to do,” Carthell said. “This scholarship is the next positive step in reaching your goals. Don't put limitations on your dreams.

“This allows you to move forward. Then you have to pay it forward and encourage others to complete the cycle.”

Carthell urged the students to follow four key steps taught to him by his grandmother — work hard, study hard, be humble and keep God first. The rest will work out, Carthell said.

Judy Calhoun also was introduced as the newly appointed executive director of the endowment. She officially begins her job today.

Calhoun said her immediate goals are to improve on established programs, such as tutorial programs and the job bank, seek grants and introduce self-improvement programs to prepare job applicants for the interviewing process.

She also plans to reach out to the community to identify people who need assistance with employment and educational opportunities.

Endowment board member Bruce Brockenborough encouraged the

scholarship recipients to achieve their goals, which will set positive examples for others. Only 7 percent of the Paducah African-American community — roughly 1 in 16 — earn higher education degrees, an issue that will not solve itself, he said.

“When you achieve your goals, the other 15 will be watching you,” Brockenborough said.

The scholarship winners are:

LeeAnna Dobson, business major at West Kentucky Community & Technical College.

Ashley Keeling, nursing major at Murray State University.

Nikeesha Kelley, elementary education major at MSU.

Keshia Moore, elementary education major at MSU.

Renita Moss, business administration major at Paducah Technical College.

Michelle Mundy, business major at Mid-Continent University.

Andrea Polk, nursing major at WKCTC.

Tito Pratt, sports administration major at University of Louisville.

Melinda Roberson, health care management major at Southern Illinois University.

Shaquila Walters, cosmetology major at WKCTC.

Scythia Abraham, journalism major at WKCTC.

Stephon McEwen, business management major at Mid-Continent

University.

Nijel Noland, plans to major in political science at the University of Louisville.

Cynthia Thomas, nursing major at WKCTC.

Matt Sanders can be contacted at 575-8659.