

GATES MILLENNIAL SCHOLAR

## Ben Holt student wants to return to Stockton

*Gallegos says urban planning can help southside*

By Nicholas Filipias, Record Staff Writer | Posted May. 30, 2016



*Rodolfo "Rudy" Gallegos, a senior at Aspire Benjamin Holt College Preparatory Academy, is one of three area winners of the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship and will attend UCLA this fall. NICHOLAS FILIPAS/THE RECORD*

This year, Stockton is home to three winners of the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship, one that can take care of all college expenses, including graduate degrees.

Among the students chosen is Rodolfo "Rudy" Gallegos, an 18-year-old senior at Aspire Benjamin Holt College Preparatory Academy in north Stockton.

Gallegos, born and raised in San Joaquin County, is part of the last class who will be awarded the scholarship. Each year to this point, 1,000 students have been chosen from a pool of 53,000 applicants. The program, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, met its goal of selecting 20,000 students from low-income backgrounds.

With the school year winding down and as Gallegos will toss the tassel on Friday, he's ready to take on the world and any challenges that await him. He already has big plans to change the community he calls home.

**Question:** Where did you go to school prior to Aspire Ben Holt?

**Answer:** I went to elementary school at River Oaks (in Galt) and then Aspire Rosa Parks Academy, and then I transferred over here in the sixth grade.

**Q:** Graduation is around the corner on June 3, how does it feel to be close to the finish line of your high school career?

**A:** It feels really great! A lot of people said high school would pass by really fast, but I've been waiting for this moment and (to) just start the next chapter of my life because I'm pretty excited for it.

**Q:** How was your time in high school?

**A:** My overall experience was definitely positive here. I think Ben Holt Academy really incubates a strong support system for all its students, and I always felt like, throughout my years, whenever I had a challenge, I really had someone to go to whenever I needed it. So I was relieved throughout my years I had someone there.

**Q:** What are your plans for college and life beyond high school?

**A:** After graduation, I plan to attend UCLA in the fall and study urban planning and economics. Originally, I wanted to major in consumer sciences in hopes to one day come back to Stockton, but I really started to get interested in urban planning and designing so with that idea in mind, I still wanted to do that field, but also complete my ultimate goal of coming back to Stockton and work for the city to continue to improve it.

**Q:** What made you decide on those majors?

**A:** Along with that its design issues, economic problems and various things like that. I would like to see Stockton revitalization of the south side and more sustainable homes for the south side and all along the community. Because with my work with Reinvent South Stockton, I've learned a lot of things of the problems that Stockton faces. I'd like to come back and continue to address them after I establish myself and graduate (college).

**Q:** How did you become involved in Reinvent South Stockton?

**A:** My sophomore year, I started to intern for Michael Tubbs and then joined the group Reinvent South Stockton, and there, I was able to get a position of youth council president. So all along the road and the journey to the Gates Millennium scholarship and everything else I've accomplished, Michael has just been there as a mentor for me, and I really appreciate him and everything he's doing, and I really support him and the endeavor he's choosing to take.

**Q:** The application process for the Gates Millennium scholarship is quite extensive.

**A:** Yes. I was able to achieve that with the help of two writing coaches that the school provided me, as they mentored me along the way. I submitted my drafts and they would basically advise and various other things that would help me along the journey. It was challenging. I mean, I really had to balance between work and submitting them all on the timeline, but I stuck to it and tried really hard and write the best essays that I could. A lot of the essays were revolved around my goals: short term, long term, community-service based. That was main thing, and then my home life and other things that contributed to my high school experience.

**Q:** 2016 marks the final year that the scholarship will be awarded to students. How did you feel when you learned you were accepted?

**A:** I was ecstatic. It was a great relief and it was great to know the burden of college tuition all of that was taken off my parents, so I was mainly relieved for that.

**Q:** What are your interests outside of school?

**A:** I really like to play baseball to go long boarding, I like to read, and hang out with friends. You know, just normal teenager stuff.

**Q:** What's your dream job?

**A:** My dream job is hopefully to be working for either a public finance or real estate firm in Los Angeles or San Diego and just climb up the ladder. Eventually, after I'm established, come back and work as a city planner for Stockton.

**Q:** What does the future hold for you in 10 to 20 years?

**A:** I really have no idea, but I like not knowing. I mean, I think I've accomplished a decent amount of things so far, and I'm just excited for the future ,and I want to use this as a catalyst for me to do even more later in my life. I hope that comes true.