

## Diversity scholarships promote inclusion

We've been inspiring and encouraging students to pursue careers in the health care industry through an ambitious scholarship program for 15 years. The scholarships are focused on the future of equity and service in health care.

In 2020, we awarded \$45,000 in scholarships to 12 students who've overcome their own personal challenges to be able to help others as a health care professional. Since inception of the program, Kaiser Permanente Colorado has provided nearly \$645,000 in scholarships to help hundreds of students achieve their dreams of working in the health care industry.

Congratulations to this year's 12 award recipients!

Name, school, volunteer service	Why health care?
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Asni Solomon,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado Physician Assistant</b>  <b>Program, Patient Care Coordinator,</b>  <b>D.A.W.N. Clinic</b></p> 	<p>My desire to go into the medical profession not only stemmed from frequent hospital visits with my Grandma, but a desire to understand other people from their cultural perspective. I found that certain minorities living in the underserved communities in Colorado do not have adequate access to health care leaving them without information to improve quality of life. As a future physician assistant, I hope to bridge this gap. I believe a critical aspect to make progress in our health care system is to bring awareness to the underserved community on what it takes to lead a healthy life.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bethany Ho,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado Anschutz School of</b>  <b>Medicine, Beth-Abraham Church in the</b>  <b>City Mobile Homeless Medical Clinic</b></p>	<p>My multiracial identity of Chinese, Pakistani, Russian, and Polish heritage and my role as the elder sister of 5 siblings have greatly influenced my pursuit of medicine. Straddling many cultural identities has given me a unique perspective and the ability to interact with people of many backgrounds. Being a minority has motivated me to pursue sustainable access to health care for disadvantaged populations. Being an older sister has blessed me with many vivacious confidantes, including 4 quizzical quadruplets and a vibrant younger sister. I quickly discovered that my passion for seeking and supplying solutions and encouragement on behalf of my siblings also applied to patient care, another impetus in my firm decision to pursue a medical career.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elias Montanez,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado Boulder,</b>  <b>North Suburban Medical Center</b></p> 	<p>Imagine a job where every day has the opportunity of being different from the previous. This is what excites me the most about selecting a career in medicine. I would like to study psychology and neuroscience to become a psychiatrist or neurologist. Studying both would help me because both are similar when it comes to learning about and treating the brain. As my family pushes me to be the best person I possibly can be, my personal goal of treating and helping the brain is what inspires and motivates me the most to pursue further education. As my motivation drives my passion, it also pushes me to work hard and to not give up, no matter the situation.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shawg Ahmed, Univ. of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, Patient Care Coordinator DAWN Clinic</b></p> 	<p>For most people, seeking dental care does not get prioritized. Instead, paying the bills and putting food on the table are among the most vital necessities. As a child, I grew up having poor oral health and I experienced first-hand how my day-to-day living became extremely difficult. I realized how relieved I was when I visited my first dentist in the United States. This spurred my desires and goals to explore the oral health system and its impact on peoples' daily lives, especially the underprivileged population. I would like to be a dentist who not only provides excellent treatment for my patients, but also a dentist who advocates for them, just as my dentists have done for me.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Simon Feseha, Univ. of Colorado School of Medicine, Veterans Affairs Hospital</b></p> 	<p>During my childhood I grew up constantly on the borderline of poverty. My parents worked 12- to 16-hour shifts to keep us afloat but often we had to decide which bills to pay first and which to pay late with the least consequence. We were either uninsured half the time or under Medicaid/Child Health Plan Plus. My parents worked hard but as Ethiopian refugees of war with families to support, they did not have the opportunity of an education to pursue better jobs. This constant struggle of accessing health care was the reason why I became interested in health care.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>America Elias Martinez, University of Denver Post Baccalaureate Program, Ronald McDonald House Charities</b></p> 	<p>I have seen how one's socioeconomic or ethnic background plays a big role in the way they are treated in a health care setting. Every human being should be treated as they would like to be treated instead of imposing practices onto others. This is a major reason in why I want to become a physician. I want our communities to see a provider who looks like them and I want them to feel comfortable enough to seek care and be understood when they do.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thuy Trang, Univ. of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, Head Start Program Oral Screenings</b></p> 	<p>Growing up with Medicaid, I learned at an early age that money is correlated with the power to choose better health care, which made me feel trapped by my circumstances. I felt most helpless when seeing my orthodontist. He yelled at his assistants in front of me and even once yelled directly at me for not letting him know that my bracket had broken prior to an appointment. With my mom's broken English and unfamiliarity with dentistry she was so scared and uncomfortable, she never spoke up about our concerns. My past motivates me to prevent anyone else from feeling helpless. I hope to be a part of a new generation of dentists who are equipped to tackle access to quality care. I strive to graduate from dental school and work in a public health clinic where I can serve patients from disadvantaged communities.</p>

<p><b>Beza Jobira,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado School of Medicine,</b>  <b>Colorado Black Health Collaborative</b></p> 	<p>My career goal is to practice medicine by serving underrepresented populations. I'm passionate about addressing chronic diseases that affect the medically underserved through outstanding clinical care, advocacy, and community service. My early exposure to health care began when I worked as a certified nurse assistant during high school. The interdisciplinary approach of patient care in nursing homes and other health care settings reminded me of the community in which I was raised in Ethiopia. The values of a strong work ethic that my parents instilled in me growing up has helped me to persevere throughout the long journey of becoming a doctor. I believe that I can make an impact in helping communities once I become a doctor. As I move on to my final year of medical school training this upcoming academic year and later on to be a resident physician, I will continue to serve underrepresented communities and I will reach back and mentor aspiring physicians and health care providers to achieve their career goals.</p>
<p><b>Othnielle Aitchedji,</b>  <b>Regis University Nursing School,</b>  <b>The Gardens at St. Elizabeth Assisted Living</b></p> 	<p>During my sophomore year of high school, I was accepted into a program called Medical Careers Collaborative —MC2. While in the program, I was able to intern in the labor and delivery department at Denver Health, which exposed me to some of the roles of labor and delivery nurses, midwives, and ob-gyns. I witnessed many births, helped when I was able, witnessed cesarean sections being performed, and shadowed 2 nurses who have guided me through this whole experience and whom I could ask questions of. This experience was unforgettable and propelled my desire to go into nursing.</p>
<p><b>Brendan Thammarath,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado Physician Assistant Program,</b>  <b>Student Subspecialty Director at DAWN Clinic</b></p> 	<p>My upbringing serves as a reminder of my responsibility to encourage the practice of healthy behavior and wellness, and a role as a physician assistant would provide me the best outlet for preventive care and community education. My intent after graduating from the Child Health Associate/Physician Assistant Program is to serve low-income, medically underserved populations and address the health inequities in these populations. I plan to return to my community as a primary care provider engaged in establishing long-term patient relationships in order to provide consistent care, education, and a reliant support system for at-risk individuals.</p>
<p><b>Orlando Mosley,</b>  <b>Univ. of Colorado Physical Therapy Program,</b>  <b>Mo' Betta Green MarketPlace</b></p> 	<p>My goal within health care is to practice as a physical therapist and be a community advocate to improve the wellness of the residents. As a health care provider, I will never know who will walk through the door. Using my life experiences as a tool, I learned how to cultivate relationships while acknowledging and respecting diversity. Utilizing that ability has equipped me to be able to practice as a physical therapist because I understand how those relationships impact a patient's healing.</p>

**Luisa Fernandez,  
Univ. of Colorado Physical Therapy  
Program, Aurora Day Resource Center**



I was born and raised half my life in Mexico before moving to the United States. My multicultural background has made me hyperaware of health inequity in our society. While working as an interpreter at a local free health clinic in the United States, I learned that I could form a unique and almost immediate bond with Hispanic patients through my Mexican heritage. In that moment I knew that was where my future lays. I greatly value human life and its potential. My journey as a PA will ultimately combine my love for human interaction with the medical knowledge and experience needed to holistically decrease disease onset and improve well-being, quality of life, and self-efficacy, no matter a person's background.