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For Immediate Release

Seven Women Receive Emerge Scholarships to Pursue Their College Education

ATLANTA (Oct. 10, 2016) – Seven Georgia women have received scholarships from the non-profit Atlanta organization [Emerge](#) to help them complete their college education.

Emerge provides educational scholarships to women in Georgia who have overcome life obstacles like divorce, poverty or illness and also give back to their community.

Since 2001, Emerge has empowered 100 women by providing more than \$500,000 in academic scholarships. These educational experiences, combined with encouragement and support provided by Emerge volunteers, give women the opportunity to advance professionally and become self-sufficient for themselves, their families and communities.

Jill Ratliff, co-president of Emerge, said “these women have had to overcome difficult circumstances that have interfered with their ability to pursue a college education. Emerge offers a way to help them complete their education and use their talents to help others.”

One recipient, Nancy Renteria, 29, of Cumming, came to the U.S. when she was 3 when her parents immigrated from Mexico. Her family worked hard to provide for her and her three siblings, but with little money, a learning disability, and parents who found it difficult to navigate the college system, she didn’t think she had a chance. But she persevered and never gave up on her dream to get an education.

As a non-traditional student at the University of North Georgia, she found it hard to find scholarships so when she learned about Emerge, she was grateful to find an organization that supported her. She runs a small non-profit organization, Ophyskids, which accepts donations of book bags and school supplies to help families in need.

“Nancy impressed all of us from the moment she walked in the door for her interview and by the end we were all hugging her and had tears in our eyes,” said Stacy Sollenberger, co-president. “She embodies everything we are about.”

Nancy will earn her BA with honors in Modern Languages from the University of North Georgia in December 2016 and wants to teach English as a second language.

“All of my situations are nothing compared to what my parents had to endure to make sure we had food on the table and a roof over our head,” she said. “Lazy is just not in our vocabulary. Honesty, integrity, hard work and resilience are words we use in our home.”

Marian Kirkland of Atlanta has a story many women share: she married young and dropped out of college to raise her children, putting her dream of a college education on hold. Two years ago, while in school to pursue a degree in psychology, she lost her husband, Ron, after 25 years of marriage. While she could have given up, she knew she had to “lead by example,” and in December will graduate from Georgia State University. Despite her busy schedule, she finds time to volunteer with Blankets of Love, which provides blankets and food for the homeless, and the Georgia Mission of Mercy.

“Life is all about choices,” she said, echoing a quote by her husband. “It’s how you choose to react to things that happen around you.”

The five other recipients include Shawneda Marks of Stone Mountain; Alyse Nicole Amores of Duluth; Tamika Chambliss of Warner Robbins; Lara Sloan of Athens; and Gabriela Diaz of Dalton.

About Emerge

Since 2001, Emerge, a Georgia non-profit organization, has empowered 100 women through education by providing more than \$500,000 in academic scholarships. These educational experiences, combined with encouragement and support provided by Emerge volunteers, give women the opportunity to advance professionally and become self-sufficient for not only themselves, but also for their families and communities.

Emerge supports Georgia women who have demonstrated a deep commitment to reaching their educational goals and give back to their communities. Through the scholarships granted, women are able to realize their dreams and generate ripples of change in the world. For more information about Emerge, please visit www.emergescholarships.org.