

**Step Up For Students  
November 2007 Student Spotlight:**



*Pictured Above: Raysha Suarez (left) and Fransh Suarez (right)*

**Raysha Suarez  
Community Christian Learning Center  
Apopka**

Raysha Suarez is excelling at Community Christian Learning Center, a school she and her older sister, Fransh Suarez, attend on Step Up For Students Scholarships. However, prior to receiving the scholarship five years ago, Raysha struggled in school and even had to repeat Kindergarten. The scholarship program and her parent-selected school enabled her to rise above her academic challenges and gave her a second chance for a promising future.

Raysha began having problems in school when she started Kindergarten in the local public school. She was placed in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program, even though her primary language was English, not Spanish. The confusion caused by the language program affected the development of her phonics skills and intensified her struggles with reading. Her learning needs were not being met and, as a result, her academic performance declined.

Maria Rodriguez, Raysha and Fransh's mother, worried that Raysha was not receiving the educational tools necessary to do well in school. She wanted to do something to help her daughter, but as a single parent with limited financial means her options were limited and affording the tuition for a private school was not possible. However, through the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program, Maria was able to send her children to Trinity Christian School in Apopka, a school that could meet their individual needs and help Raysha overcome her academic challenges.

Upon entering Trinity Christian, the staff recommended that Raysha repeat Kindergarten because it appeared that she had not fully developed the basic skills at the public school. The teachers worked with Raysha to overcome her struggles with reading and helped her get back on track. Over the next couple of years, Raysha's performance in her classes increased significantly. Rather than failing her classes, she earned A's and B's. As a result of her improved grades she earned a spot on the school's honor roll each semester and continued to excel. She no longer struggled with reading – instead she was excelling and even won a reading challenge contest!

On the opposite end, Raysha's sister Fransh, a good student from the start, was able to reach her full potential through the academic programs at the new school. The advanced curriculum challenged and engaged her in learning and the encouragement for teachers motivated her to succeed. As a result, she excelled in school, continually making A's and B's in her classes and was listed on the honor roll each semester.

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Maria Rodriguez was pleased with the education her daughters received at Trinity Christian, but since the scholarship only covers \$3,750 of the tuition, she could no longer afford the remaining tuition costs at the school. Therefore for the 2007-08 school year she chose to send them to Community Christian Learning Center in Apopka, a school she felt could provide her daughters with the same quality education as Trinity.

Today, Raysha (5<sup>th</sup> grade) and Fransh (7<sup>th</sup> grade) are continuing to excel at Community Christian Learning Center. Raysha now dreams of pursuing a career as a veterinarian, while Fransh hopes to become a teacher one day. Together, Trinity Christian and Community Christian have given them the opportunity to not only overcome academic struggles, but also to be challenged in school and reach their full potential. Maria Rodriguez and her family thank Step Up For Students and its donors for making it all possible.

### **About Community Christian Learning Center**

Community Christian Learning Center, a small school located in Apopka, Fla., currently serves nearly 60 students in grades K-12, 28 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The cost of tuition at the school, including books and registration, is \$3,750. Community Christian annually administers the Stanford Achievement Test.

### **About Trinity Christian School**

Located in Apopka, Trinity Christian School serves children in Kindergarten through eighth grade. Trinity also has early childhood education and nursery programs. The school currently serves 465 students, 30 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The cost of tuition at Trinity Christian is \$4,800 for grades Kindergarten through fifth and \$5,280 for grades sixth through eighth. The school annually administers the Stanford Achievement Test.

### **About the Step Up For Students Scholarship Recipients**

The typical Step Up For Students scholarship family has an average income of \$23,000 for a family of four, and more than half of the scholarship families are single-parent homes. The typical scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. They are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. Parents apply for Step Up For Students Scholarships so their children can attend the school best suited for their special needs, beliefs, and abilities, and to address negative trends in their child's learning skills and/or environment.

Step Up For Students Scholarships are funded by corporations that redirect up to 75 percent of their corporate state income tax liability to a qualified Scholarship Funding Organization in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit [www.StepUpForStudents.com](http://www.StepUpForStudents.com), or call 1-800 782-9140 for more information.

**Other ways you can support Step Up For Students.** Monetary donations and grants from individuals, foundations and other organizations are vital to the scholarship program. Because 100 percent of the CTC funds must be used for scholarships, there is no allowance in the law to cover program costs associated with administrating and distributing the scholarships. Program costs are funded by generous individuals and foundations that believe in equipping all of Florida's children with the educational tools for a successful future. It only costs the Step Up For Students scholarship funding organizations \$50 to administer each scholarship. Because each donation is matched 100 percent by the Walton Family Foundation, a donation of only \$25 will provide \$3,750 scholarship to a low-income child. For more information, call 1 (866) 344-9553 or visit [www.stepupforstudents.com/donors.htm](http://www.stepupforstudents.com/donors.htm).

