

American Century Championship

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Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Gary Quinn

Terri Upshaw

Nancy Harrison

Valery Gonzalez

Press Conference

Gene Upshaw Memorial Scholarship

THE MODERATOR: This is our annual Gene Upshaw Scholarship presentation. With us are Gary Quinn, NBC VP of programming and general manager of owned properties; Terri Upshaw is here; from Lake Tahoe Community College, Nancy Harrison, director of the foundation; and this year's award recipient, Valery Gonzalez.

Gary, can you provide a background?

GARY QUINN: I can't believe it's been since 2008, Terri and I were just talking, that so much time has passed. But with that, I think one of the most special things is the connection that I have with her and with Nancy now over the years.

I've told this story every year, I have one of the best jobs in the world, and it's because of Jon Miller who created this event in 1995. As the years went on and I got my job, Jon gave me the autonomy to manage the event.

But Gene was this larger-than-life character that put his arm around me because he knew I was taking on more responsibility. But he was such an unbelievable presence. And, like, I didn't understand why he was taking me under his wing.

But he was just so good to me. He'd give me leadership advice. He became a mentor every time that I came out every year.

On and off the field, he's a hall of famer and, of course, the NFLPA. Here's this huge giant of a man who is treating me



so well. And then to lose him, the first instinct was, how can we honor his name.

Obviously Terri and he are from this area, and the area has given so much to the event. We're always in the mindset how can we give back.

And there was no better way in my mind to have his name put on this scholarship where we can help a deserving student in the area.

One of the best things about it, there's a lot of good things, but most of these people, like Valery, might not know who Gene was. But I really wanted them to have the opportunity to look up who he was and all of the great characteristics, his leadership characteristics and how he gave back to others and how he could be an example to those who didn't know who he was.

Then the other great part of it, again, as the years have gone on, the bonds that we have as friends -- what Nancy does to give us the opportunity to review which students we can help, and to hear about all the alumni that have received the award.

Paul and Linda, who work over at the lodge, their son Garrett was one of the first recipients of the scholarship. And he's a physical therapist, which I know that's where Valery's going. And I know that Nancy and Terri have stayed connected to some of the last five or six years of recipients. And it's just a great thing, and it's something to be celebrated for Gene.

Q. Terri, we know this is always an emotional one for you, even though many years have passed. But it means so much. As Gary just mentioned, what's really sweet is you've been in touch with a lot of the winners to help them along and to see how they're doing and make sure they're doing okay. Give us your thoughts on this year's award?

TERRI UPSHAW: First of all, I'd like to point out that Gary usually gets me into tears. So far I'm doing okay. But it could be coming real soon here.



I'm very proud of this. The work that you all have done to put this together and to find these amazing recipients is -- every year it's better and better. And it's, like, where is the bar going?

Valery, this year, for you, congratulations. I love staying in touch with the past recipients and hearing their stories. Learning where they've gone, what they've done, their continued successes is just something that it's just beautiful. I can't thank you enough, Gary, for putting this together.

GARY QUINN: It's my honor. It really is.

THE MODERATOR: As you mentioned with Gary's involvement, NBC is donating \$10,000 every year to this scholarship fund, which is extremely generous. I think everybody appreciates it. I know everybody in this community does, too, because it says a lot about us.

Speaking about this community, from the Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation, we have Executive Director Nancy Harrison. She's going to tell us more about this and about Valery's story.

NANCY HARRISON: I'm so excited to be here and represent the foundation. This is definitely a highlight of my year. And it really shows what we're doing. So the foundation, we partner with generous organizations and individuals to support our students.

This year, we are providing over \$500,000 in scholarships for our students who are continuing at LTCC and then also transferring on.

We try and make education as affordable as possible for our students. And then when they graduate and transfer on, it is where they're hitting higher costs. So this \$10,000 scholarship is so impactful for Valery. Valery is going on to Chico. She's actually receiving over \$17,000 in scholarships through our various donors and scholarships. She's one of our superstars.

She has been very involved. She's involved in student government. She volunteers. She has worked at the golf tournament for years with the local Soroptimists group.

She's embodying Gene's legacy because she's giving back. And that is her goal to continue doing that moving forward.

LTCC, we had about 300 graduates this year. We are growing. And, like I said, we're working on making -- we want our graduates to get out debt free and then be able to continue on, earn a bachelor's degree with little to no debt.

Valery spoke at our commencement ceremony. She did an absolutely amazing job, just so poised and confident. We're all so proud of her. She's born and raised in Tahoe, and we're so excited to see where she's going to go.

She is the fourth LTCC recipient of the Gene Upshaw Scholarship. And the previous three are all doing spectacular. They're continuing their education. Richard Salazar has earned his bachelor's degree. He's continuing to get his master's. He's a counselor for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Kettja Bennett is about to earn her engineering degree. She has an internship. She's working on a project back on the LTCC campus, so, to see her come full circle is so rewarding.

And then last year's recipient, Yuli, is at UC Davis. She's staying and doing summer school and has internships.

The support, not only the financial support, but Terri and Gary's support with them personally is just really helping these students succeed. And we're so grateful for that support. Thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: Now our honored guest. Valery, we're looking forward to hearing your story and you telling us what you're looking forward to. And congratulations from everybody here. Thank you. A great honor.

VALERY GONZALEZ: Thank you. I want to say thank you so much for this opportunity.

A little bit about me. As you mentioned, I'm born and raised here in Tahoe. And I grew up with a single mother, family of four. And I grew up in an area where I was always seeing financial struggles. So that kind of grew into me, not really thinking that I was going to have the opportunity to go to college. It wasn't really something that I ever saw from anyone in my family. I didn't really know the importance of it.

It wasn't until I got to around high school, my brother came back from -- after having been away for some time, and I was ready to settle. I was ready to get right into the workforce because I knew that I needed to help my family. So college wasn't even in my mind at that point.

When my brother came back and he saw that I was ready to settle for something that isn't very ideal. I wasn't going to be very happy doing it, he told me, no, you need to go and get an education.

Neither one of us had any experience in higher education.



But he stayed up with me late at night and helped me with my schoolwork, helped me with my scholarship applications, with figuring out where I want to go to college.

I had a lot of great mentors, too, throughout high school.

I was just really cruising through life and I didn't really know anything about scholarships. I didn't know about clubs. I didn't know about volunteering. It wasn't until I got to high school -- again, I had great mentors.

I got into sports medicine, and that's where I really found out that physical therapy is a really big passion of mine.

My mentor -- Isaiah Tannaci, amazing teacher, amazing mentor. He helped me do rehab plans for athletes. This is really rewarding and something that I want to do.

I went through all four years, and I had a lot of people telling me that it was going to be too hard, that I shouldn't take the sports medicine classes. It was just going to be too challenging for me.

I ignored it. I went on, and then Isaiah Tannaci ended up awarding me with the sports excellence award. So I realized I really can do this.

And then, again, through volunteering, I didn't know anything about it and then I had my teacher, Mr. Filce, who told me, do you want to be the president of this club. I said, sure why not. And it ended up being for the Soroptimists Club at the high school. I fell in love with volunteering after that and I wanted to do as much as I could.

I did it for two years, just all volunteering. I got some friends to get into it. It was just awesome. And really, really thankful for all the people that helped me get to this point because I wouldn't be here without them.

After going to college, I met even more amazing people. I got more mentors. I got opportunities open to me that I never thought would be possible, especially going into student senate.

I was first just a senator. I kind of learned how the whole room works. And then the next year I ended up going for a position, a higher position. I got the delegate position, and that was just the most amazing thing that could have happened to me.

I got through that position. I was able to make decisions for state policy. Through the student senate, government, I was able to -- we have something called general assembly, where students in the community college system make up

resolutions, and we all as delegates come together, read the resolutions through and then vote whether we want this to go into state policy or not.

That was just something that, I didn't know anything about government, but through this I found out I loved to read about it. Seeing that this is going to directly affect community college students was something that I kind of wanted to take part in because I knew students who were struggling with certain things, and I was able to advocate for them.

I also had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C. to go advocate federally, which was amazing. I never ever thought I would be in a room like that. It was really, really rewarding.

I got to talk with Mike Thompson's team and Mark DeSaulnier. I got to advocate for HSIs. I know that's something that the Lake Tahoe Community College is really proud of. It's so important to be able to do that.

I'm going to be honest, I didn't know much about Gene Upshaw. But when I saw this scholarship, I thought why not, I want to see.

I researched about him, and what I learned was just amazing. Really, really truly embodied what it is to want to serve other people. And I'm sure that going into these meeting rooms and talking with higher ups is really intimidating.

You want to advocate and you want to make sure that they're representing the people that you care about.

Especially through his experience, I'm sure he saw some disadvantages from the players and things like that. It's something that really hit home for him. And when I saw that, it was truly motivating. That's exactly how I want to be. I want to make sure that I am serving the people I care about and even anybody.

I just want to make sure that to the capacity that I can that I want to help people. That's why I also chose physical therapy, is to make sure that I can do it for the rest of my life. And I hope I can keep volunteering and I can keep doing these things for other people.

THE MODERATOR: Yours is a great story. I love the part about you're not letting people tell you what your limits are. That's really special. That will carry you through life. I guarantee you.

Q. I know you can do anything you set your mind to, based on your story. I did want to ask you, do you

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

have a dream position in the physical therapy world or a certain aspect you want to be involved with?

VALERY GONZALEZ: I've kind of thought about it. I have done a few internships. I've done one at Barton and I've done another in an outpatient clinic at PT Revolution.

I was talking to a few of the PTs there. And I wasn't planning on going for doctorates, but they told me that it's a lot more rewarding in the sense that you can actually be part of the bigger plan that helps these people get better.

After that I said, yeah, I want to go for a doctorate. I think, honestly, I kind of like more of an outpatient setting from what I've been able to see. Whatever door opens up, if it's outpatient, if it's at a hospital, if it's traveling, I'm ready to do any of it.

Q. A big takeaway I get from this is the ability to do more, give back more. Every time I'm here I keep thinking about that, the way American Century does it with the Stowers Institute, with this the scholarship, the way it affects people, and just the pressure on you to motivate others to do volunteer work, to do things to give back. Is that something that you hold really close to your heart?

VALERY GONZALEZ: Actually, at the college, I started up another Soroptimists level. We called it SITSters. I really wanted to give students an opportunity to kind of experience exactly what I have experienced through volunteering. Again, it's really fulfilling. It's really awesome to be able to have a hand in helping others.

So it was really big. My first year, I think we had around 30 members, which was amazing. We had a lot of great opportunities. We were working with -- we were doing food drives. We did this golf tournament as well. We did a bunch of little things out in the community. It was awesome.

And I also had another friend who started up the Kiwanis level at the college. And we would kind of like interchange our volunteer opportunities.

Kiwanis was another great organization that motivated people to volunteer. We would share members. It was awesome to see it grow really big at the college.

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