



Campus Compact Montana

About the 2016 Civic Engagement Scholarship Winners:

Gabriel Aponte, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT. Aponte is a sophomore with a triple major in Environmental Science, Environmental Management and Policy, and Business. As president of the Environmental Club at RMC he has helped run the campus recycling and BikeRMC programs, raised funds for 10 students to attend the Wildlife Society Conference, and planted trees at Pompey's National Monument. He has also participated in clean-up efforts at Rimrocks—a site of historical importance to RMC, participated with other students in the Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council, and participated in rallies in Billings to raise awareness about environmental issues.

"As college students, we care about the future. We have the opportunity to build a better society."

Dawn Holt, Blackfeet Community College, Browning, MT. Ms. Holt will receive her AA in Addictions Studies in the Spring of 2017 and her plans include being a Licensed Addiction Counselor. She has been very active in substance abuse recovery; assisting elders, at-risk youth, and the homeless; and working within her community to preserve the Blackfeet way of life.

"The groups I am involved with are people with the same vision, the same goals to help our people overcome the struggles of addiction, and learn to live a healthy lifestyle in a good way and be good to one another, help one another, trust each other, love each other, and most importantly mentor each other."

Rachel Juel, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT. Juel is a junior and an Honors Student majoring in Science and Biochemistry. After graduation she plans to volunteer for the Peace Corps as a biology or science teacher, before returning to school to get her Masters and possibly Doctorate degrees. Her volunteer work has included being a ski instructor for people with disabilities, sharing her love of science in elementary schools and high schools throughout Montana through the STEM Space Public Outreach Team, being a group leader for Extending Your Horizons, a day-long STEM camp for young girls, and traveling to Haiti to work with locals in constructing houses, establishing gardens and assisting in a travelling medical clinic.

"I believe that all students should have the support and desire to attend an institute of higher education...My primary goal is local: uplifting rural Montana students so they too may be successful in College life."

Chris O'Bleness, University of Montana, Missoula, MT. O'Bleness will graduate from UM's Doctor of Pharmacy Program in Spring 2017. From there he plans to continue his community service as a practicing pharmacist to medically underserved populations. Throughout college he has volunteered at the Poverello Center and the Missoula Food Bank. He served for 3 years at the crisis center at the University of Montana, and as student director of Advocates for Non-

Violence, he worked to raise awareness about violence and assault, and was a guest speaker at the 2015 Not in Our State Sexual Assault Summit.

“My vision is a world where people are actively living their lives in loving ways. Loving ways such that your intentions and actions come from a place of understanding and compassion. That we pursue these aims with joy and inclusiveness in our communities. That we reach out with kindness out of love for others, ourselves, and the world around us. And that we strive to have the greatest positive impact on the world we can.”

Emily Schaff, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT. Ms. Schaff is a Junior majoring in Communications Studies with minors in Business Management and Organizational Leadership. Emily has been a volunteer for the Office of Community Engagement and the Office of Spiritual Life on campus. Through these campus offices she has created many volunteer opportunities for her peers, as well as participated in them. These events include Halloween for Hunger and No Kid Hungry campus campaigns, and fundraising efforts for local elementary schools. Through the Montana Special Olympics she created a campus SO club and a Respect Rally to help raise awareness about the derogatory use of the word, “retard(ed).”

“As a sibling of a special needs individual, I have always had a special place in my heart for advocating for special needs people...through my institution’s family-like community and support system, I was able to make lasting relationships with Special Olympics Montana staff members, coaches, volunteers, and athletes.”

Ashlin Staso, University of Montana, Missoula, MT. Staso will graduate in Spring 2017 with a BS in Exercise Science, Health and Human Performance. She plans to continue on to graduate school and to eventually become a Physician Assistant. Ashlin has volunteered her time working in children’s after school programs and served as a peer mentor to incoming freshman through the Davidson Honors College. She traveled to Antigua, Guatemala to participate in a number of service projects including building homes for poor families and visiting with children at a local orphanage. She has also been a volunteer camp counselor for children with muscular dystrophy, and has been a volunteer big sister through Big Brothers and Sisters of Missoula for several years. She was also elected as a Student Representative to attend the National Student Leadership Forum in Washington, DC.

“I envision a world where individuals recognize that their volunteer contributions do not have to be monumental or extravagant to be meaningful and influential. I did not set out at the beginning of my college education to be the most active advocate or volunteer on campus. I simply set out with the intention to use my talents and abilities to give back to my community and world, no matter how small the task seemed. Reflecting back on the culmination of four years of dedication and effort, I have been blessed to see that my efforts have made a difference in the lives of others. Volunteer work has taught me that it isn’t always about being the smartest, most creative, most athletic, or most successful. It is simply a matter of identifying a need and taking active steps to meet that need.”

Amber Williamson, Blackfeet Community College, Browning, MT. Williamson will graduate in Spring 2016 with an AA in Social Work and then she will continue pursuing her Social Work degree at the University of Montana. Williamson’s volunteer work has been with late and end stage cancer patients, domestic violence issues, suicide prevention and addiction reduction. Upon graduation with her BA in Social Work, she plans to move back to her home to continue serving her community in these same areas.

“Having been raised in beautiful Blackfeet country, I understand the struggles and hardships bestowed on our people. So much preventable death and suffering that I could not be true to myself, nor my family, if I did not pursue a degree to serve my community in a positive way. As a child and teen directly affected by continual

death and addiction, with a lifetime in my community, surrounded by violence and grief all around, I grew into an adult and mother of three (very young daughters) who has the steeled determination to make a difference.”

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