

**Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund**  
**Briefing Report to Bethesda Friends Meeting**  
**September 2011**

**Introduction**

The Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund helps graduating seniors in DC public schools to go to college. Quakers have been running the program for thirty years. The fund is named for Mary Jane Simpson, a member of Friends Meeting of Washington who was a social worker in the DC public schools. She launched this fund and was its strong champion. Since she first challenged Friends to share our resources to help deserving DC public school students go to college, \$1,000 and \$1,500 scholarships have been awarded to more than 50 college-bound students from 13 different DC public high schools.

This scholarship fund is managed by the Friends Meeting of Washington. Bethesda Friends Meeting participates in funding, selecting the awardees, and making decisions about the program's policies and practices.

The Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship program is awarded to students with

- demonstrated drive and determination to succeed in college,
- high academic standing (GPA, class rank, AP classes)
- major financial need (usually the family income is \$10,000-35,000)
- demonstrated success in overcoming past obstacles
- strong values and contribution to the community.

The process we use, the Scholarship Announcement, and the Application Form appear as Attachments 1, 2 and 3 to this report. Attachment 4 presents information on sources and uses of funds. Funds mobilized during the 2010-2011 fiscal year support the academic costs of 16 students. These include four freshmen, five sophomores, four juniors, and three seniors.

**The New Freshmen**

In June 2011, the committee selected four graduating seniors from a group of 39 applicants, to receive a Simpson scholarship. All graduated at the top of their class and are heavily engaged in service to their school and community. All have extreme financial needs and are facing great personal adversity, but they have an awesome determination as well as commitment to others. They are an impressive group.

In the past, most of these scholarships have gone to young women. This year, many of the strongest candidates were young men, and we awarded scholarships to one woman and three men. To respect their privacy, we are listing only their first names in this report.

1. **Jeannette M.** graduated from Cardozo Senior High School. She has experienced extreme hardship. She was abused by her parents, and emigrated to the US from Guinea when she was 14. The relative she came to live with also abused her. She moved to live with an aunt, who in 2009 abandoned her and left her homeless. Since then she has been living at the Sasha Bruce Independent Living Program, with a stipend of \$45 a week for groceries and all her other needs.

From a young age Jeannette has learned how to manage a household, plan and cook meals and budget her time and money. She gives guidance and support to other abused kids at Sasha Bruce, is part of the youth work program there, and has an impressive leadership position.

When she came to the US, Jeannette spoke French but no English. This notwithstanding, she became an academic leader at Cardozo Senior High School. She has a GPA of 3.54 and is ranked 4 in a class of 106. She is member of the National Honor Society. One of her teachers says she “engages deeply with ideas but is also open to the opinions of others.” She is a member of the Student Government, the Africa Caribbean Club, and the Cardozo SHS Marching Band.

She aspires to become a registered nurse. She will attend Trinity University in the fall and intends to graduate with a BS in nursing, then go on for her Masters Degree.

2. **Marcus L.** graduated from McKinley Technology High School. He became an Eagle Scout at the age of 15. At 16 he was both the youngest member of his troop and had the highest rank. He volunteers at the DC Central Kitchen and with Food and Friends. For the past two years he has worked 20-30 hours per week at CVS, and he has already made arrangements to work at CVS while in college. He has also worked as an intern at the Howard University Nanotechnology Lab.

He is very interested in electrical engineering, digital electronics, and computers. His activities include the GWU Upward Bound Program, the Future Business Leaders of America, the McKinley Technology High School Robotics Team, and Varsity Cross Country Track.

His GPA is 3.68. He has taken a heavy load of AP and honors courses. He is a member of the National Honor Society and won the UVa Jefferson Book Award.

He explained that his inspiration is his mother. She was 16 when Marcus was born. Then she put herself through college. She’s now a control analyst at Freddie Mac – He said, “I watched her go from the bottom to the top.”

At Clemson University, he plans to major in the Renewable Energy Program in Electrical Engineering. Marcus has a calm and radiant spirit.

3. **Theodore S-G.** graduated from the IDEA Public Charter School. He is fascinated with computers, and information technology is his career interest. He is creative and sees problems in

a different light from others. He uses his passion to help many organizations in his neighborhood. In his junior and senior years he did nearly 200 hours of community service – One of his teachers says “he has gone far above the ...hours of community service required of him as a graduate of [IDEA Charter School] and has put his considerable technical talent to use in upgrading, repairing, and building computer labs, networks, and PC machines” for schools and churches. He also helped prepare and serve food at the Feast of Sharing for 5000, sponsored by the Metropolitan Baptist Church, and provided information systems over a two year period for the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, Inc.

His GPA is 3.61, and he has received awards from the National Honor Society and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, among others.

He will attend Howard University, where he will receive a full-tuition scholarship. (Our assistance will help with his books and housing costs.) He is a self-effacing math whiz, who steadfastly deploys his creativity and intellect to serve others.

**4. DeAnjilo P-F.** graduated from Friendship Public Charter School. He is a Posse Scholar, recipient of a full tuition scholarship from the Posse Foundation based on his leadership potential as a minority student. As one of the 9 Posse scholars from Washington, DC, he will attend Pepperdine University and will receive mentoring, networking support, and opportunities for business internships. The Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship will fund his non-tuition educational expenses such as books and housing.

DeAnjilo has great drive. He has already accumulated 24 college credits from AP courses. He has a GPA of 3.1. He was the Student Government Association Vice-president and Treasurer, a lead debater and researcher on the debate team; and since 9<sup>th</sup> grade he has been active in the Leadership Criminal Justice Program. He is active in JV football and baseball. In summers from 2007 through 2010, he worked in Mayor Fenty’s Summer Youth Employment Program.

One of his teachers wrote, “”Thus far in my teaching career, I have encountered very few students whose critical thinking skills are so sophisticated and whose writing skills are eloquent and meaningful.” Another teacher wrote, “DeAnjilo is a role model both in and out of the classroom....On a daily basis, I saw DeAnjilo model exemplary behavior, work ethic, and character.... He models tenacity and self-discipline by taking on challenges that result in opportunities... DeAnjilo aspires to do great things.”

DeAnjilo’s family has virtually no income. His inspirations are his mother and the whole school organization that, he said, has helped and supported him.

## **Bethesda Friends Meeting Support in 2010-11**

In 2010-2011, Bethesda Friends Peace and Social Justice Committee allocated \$1,000 to the Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund. Individuals and families contributed \$1,916 through the Social Concerns Box, and the junior high students raised \$472. This total of \$3,388 will support one scholarship awarded this June, amounting to \$1,500 for a student's freshman year, and will fund one rising sophomore at \$1,000, one junior at \$500, and part of the \$500 scholarship for a senior.

## **Looking Forward**

In 2011 the MJS Fund decided to formalize its policy of supporting students for the duration of college, with each student receiving \$3,500 total. This \$3,500 is disbursed on a declining basis: \$1,500 for the freshman year, \$1,000 for the sophomore year, \$500 for the junior year and \$500 for the senior year. The continuity of support throughout college recognizes that the students have a great ongoing need, in order to stay in school, and that it is actually more difficult for them to mobilize scholarship funds after the freshman year. Our experience is that ongoing financial support (though small) also facilitates our involvement in their lives. The students write to us each spring to tell us how they are doing. We are also their sounding boards and provide encouragement to them on problems they are facing.

With the MJS Fund's commitment to support students throughout the four years of college, there is now the need to improve the predictability of funding. When we commit to a student, we need to know we have the \$3,500 to carry that student through all four years. The available funding influences the number of scholarships we can commit to provide each year.

In 2011-12 the total requirements for the program will be \$14,500. There will be 17 students, rather than 16, in the program: four freshman, four sophomores, five juniors, and four seniors.

The BFM Peace and Social Justice Committee has allocated \$3,500 to the Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund for the 2011-12 fiscal year. We hope that participants in the Meeting will dig deep to match that amount this year. We'll be asking for contributions through the September Social Concerns Box. If our individual contributions and those from FMW remain at the same level as last year, the scholarship program will need to draw funds from its reserve, to fund all 17 students in the program in 2011-12. These amazing DC Public School graduates, who are defying tremendous life challenges, depend on our Meeting's support to take the big step to get to college, and to make it through.