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Above, college student Georgina Serrano, right, stands with the symbolic big check she received for winning one of the three Orange Housing Authority scholarships presented at the public housing agency's sixth annual Youth Scholarship Golf Tournament at the Brooklake Country Club in Florham Park on Monday, Sept. 12. Above right, OHA Executive Director Walter McNeil, center, stands with a group of female golfers who came to participate. Right, McNeil, center, stands with OHA publicist Phyllis Greer, left, and OHA Board of Directors Chairman and former Orange Councilman Coram Rimes.



OHA Golf Tournament raises money for students

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

The Orange Housing Authority hosted its sixth annual Youth Scholarship Golf Tournament under sunny skies on Monday, Sept. 12, at the Brooklake Country Club in Florham Park and, according to OHA Executive Director Walter McNeil, this year's event was the biggest and best yet.

"We are having our sixth annual Golf Scholarship fundraiser for three young people, who are going to college," said McNeil on Monday, Sept. 12. "It's incredible. We've got more diversity here, more women playing and contributing to the event, as well as people from different areas of the state. People are doing different things, from engineers to architects to lawyers to businesspeople; they want to participate and have a good time with us while supporting people who are in need."

This year's scholarship recipients are Georgina Serrano, Darryn Stewart and Amina Amparbin.

Serrano and Amparbin were present at the Brookdale Country Club on Monday, Sept. 12, to receive their awards. This was a repeat performance for Amparbin; McNeil noted she is a rarity when it comes to the OHA Youth Scholarships as she has received the award two years running. Stewart was not able to participate in awards ceremony due to a prior commitment.

"I'm just excited about today and I'm excited about the potential that we're going to be supporting three young people who are going to go to college and they're really going to benefit from this," said McNeil on Monday, Sept.

12. "We have a returning person, who's going to get another scholarship. She got a scholarship last year and we're really helping her out. She's got over a 3.5 (grade-point average) and she's taking biology and chemistry and that sort of stuff. She wants to be a doctor. You talk to her and listen to her story and she's living out her dream."

"The two years that she did in college, those are the weeding-out years. A lot of kids say they want to be doctors or scientists and they switch majors because it's too tough," McNeil continued. "She's doing really well. She's going to be something. Mark my words: She will be a doctor. ... You can see it in her eyes. You can see it in every word that she states. She's going to work hard and she's really doing it. She speaks well, communicates well and she follows through on things."

McNeil said he considers Amparbin, Serrano, Stewart and all the previous OHA Youth Scholarship recipients as ambassadors for the public housing agency. Amparbin and Serrano said the designation is one they take seriously.

"I went to Park Avenue and I had Dr. Hackett and now I major in biology and I'm happy to be here at the Orange Housing Authority Scholarship Awards, and I'm very thankful. I want to be a pediatrician. I love the babies and you know you've got to start them when they're young, because once you've nurtured them, they're good to go," said Amparbin, a sophomore at Montclair State University, on Monday, Sept. 12. "I love that I'm getting a scholarship. This is my second year, so I'm very appreciative and very happy. I'm going to spend it on stuff that's going to help me. My advice is to apply for every scholarship that you

have. It's not hard. It's worth it. College is a struggle, but you've got to get through it. School is important, so you've got to go."

Serrano, a senior at the College of St. Elizabeth, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. She said she's "happy, because this will go a long way to pay off student loans and other things school-related."

"I want to be a forensic analyst," Serrano said. "I would only like to say the Orange Housing Authority has helped a lot of people like me in Orange with not only helping them pay their rent, but also helping them pursue their dreams, pursue their careers, to get a higher education, to better themselves and to represent the community in a light that others haven't seen them in before. If they set their mind to it and believe in themselves, then anybody can do it."

Golfer Darryl Jeffries, who served as spokesman for the city of East Orange during former Mayor Robert Bowser's tenure, said that's what he likes to hear from young people aspiring to do great things in their lives and their communities. He said he turned out with members of the Mid Island Golfers Foundation of New York to play in the tournament for this reason, and the group returns to the OHA annual Youth Scholarship Golf Tournament each year to support deserving students.

"Using golf as a vehicle for fundraising, when it's well-organized, as this event is, then it's highly effective and they're able to achieve their goals and objectives to assist deserving students (to) achieve their higher education aspirations, deserving young people from the city of Orange Township. So a highly commendable effort today."