

## Stories of Success

### From Students in WSF's D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program

#### **\*\*The Tanner Family\*\***

Sharon Tanner first heard about the scholarship program in the newspaper. At the time, her son Zachary was in fifth grade and Sharon was already looking ahead to his future. She applied for the scholarship because she wanted Zachary to have a better education – smaller classes and a more structured learning environment. She was looking for a school close to home with strong academics and a secure place where kids wouldn't fall through the cracks. Sharon applied and Zachary was awarded a scholarship the first year of the program in 2004.

At the beginning, Zachary attended Nativity Catholic Academy. The initial transition from his public school was not as smooth as Sharon had hoped, as Zachary had to get adjusted to the higher expectations and academic demands. Through the opportunity of school choice, Sharon decided that St. Ann's was a better fit for Zachary's needs where he thrived there in middle school and is now a 10th grader at St. John's College High School.



**“At St. John's, I'm challenged,” Zachary says. “You have to be aware of what you're doing, and the teachers are there to help you.”**

Zachary gets good grades—although he admits that the coursework at St. John's is not easy. But it is a challenge that he welcomes. Aside from several achievement awards, Zachary has been active outside of the classroom—he has played basketball since middle school and he is also part of Junior ROTC. He even made ‘Corporal’ this year.



**“It [the scholarship] has affected me in a good way, and without the scholarship, I wouldn't be here at St. John's,” Zachary explains. “This experience keeps me humble because without it, I don't have to see my mom struggle to give me a good education. I'm getting one, and this has helped me for the better.”**

Although Sharon attended D.C. public schools, she acknowledges that the system is very different today and that most public schools don't have the resources and often have to deal with other issues aside from teaching. At St. John's, she likes the sense of community and the responsiveness of the school administration and teachers. Sharon and Zachary attended the recent school fair together, already thinking about college and what lies ahead.

**“I feel very blessed [that] he has this opportunity to be educated like this,” says Sharon. “I want to see him graduate from St. John's and move on. This will open up doors and provide opportunities for college. I want him to have better.”**