

HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION AND SPONSORS HONOR EIGHT HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS FROM ACROSS AMERICA AND PUERTO RICO AT THE 16th NATIONAL YOUTH AWARDS IN SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO – Vme TO BROADCAST EVENT AS SPECIAL ON TV

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San Juan, PR - The Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) and its sponsors will recognize NASCAR Driver Daniel Suarez, STEM Leader Dr. Frances Colón, and eight high school seniors from across America and Puerto Rico at the 16th National Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards on Thursday, January 29th (Registration 9:45 a.m.; Media Op/Red Carpet/Breakfast/Reception 10 a.m.; Ceremony 11 a.m.-12:00 p.m.) at the El San Juan Resort (6063 Isla Verde Avenue, Carolina, PR 00979). The students were selected from thousands of applicants and then hundreds of regional recipients to eight national awardees for their leadership in the classroom and community and their focus in the categories. In addition to grants used for their education or innovation, the Youth Awardees will receive Google Chromebooks and personalized styling from Macy's, which is also serving as Host of the Youth Awards. Vme TV will broadcast the event as a special and vignettes of the students, Suarez, and Colón will be used for a public awareness campaign to promote the leaders as role models. The hashtag for the event is #YouthAwards.

The students boast nearly a 4.0 GPA and have logged thousands of hours of community service as well as inspired others around them to reach higher.

The National Youth Awardees (bios at <http://www.hispanicheritage.org/epk/>) are:

Business & Entrepreneurship, presented by *BBVA Compass*: **Briam Hernandez**, Hialeah, FL Community Service, presented by *Colgate-Palmolive Company*: **Mariano Stephens**, Austin, TX Education, presented by *Southwest Airlines*: **Annabel Campo**, Davie, FL Engineering & Mathematics, presented by *ExxonMobil*: **Laura Vasquez-Bolanos**, Leesburgh, VA Healthcare & Science, presented by *CVS Health*: **Pedro Gallardo**, Coronado, CA Innovation & Technology, presented by *Entertainment Software Association Foundation*: **Sophia Sanchez-Maes**, Las Cruces, NM Media & Entertainment, presented by *Macy's*: **Deyaneira Raices**, Camuy, PR Sports & Fitness, presented by *NASCAR*: **Matthew Reitman**, San Antonio, TX

The 23 year-old Suarez is a Mexican stock car racing driver who currently competes in the NASCAR Toyota Series for Telcel Racing, the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East for Rev Racing (as a member of the Drive for Diversity), and the NASCAR Nationwide Series for Joe Gibbs Racing and RAB Racing. Dr. Colón, who is has a Ph.D., serves as Acting Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State at the U.S. Department of State where she promotes integration of science and technology into foreign policy dialogues; global scientific engagement for capacity-building; advancement of women in science; and innovation as a tool for economic growth around the world.

"We are proud to honor yet another class of outstanding young Latino leaders who will certainly make an impact on our communities and workforce as they move forward in their careers," said Antonio Tijerino, President and CEO of HHF. "We are also privileged to recognize Danny Suarez and Frances Colón as role models for all young people. We thank our sponsors for their support as we focus in what we consider priority fields for America. We truly believe our Youth Awardees are leaders of today, not tomorrow. Frankly, we can't afford to wait."

Southwest Airlines is the Official Airline of the Youth Awards and Macy's Official Wardrobe Sponsor. In addition to the category sponsors, supporters and partners include UPS, PhRMA, Google, NRCCUA, Direct Auto Insurance, Rebuild the Dream, i.am.angel Foundation, OCI Group, Es Tiempo, and Voto Latino.

The Youth Awards program is the beginning to HHF's award-winning Leadership Cycle with the students being tracked, prepared and positioned for leadership in the community and workforce through the Latinos On Fast Track (LOFT)

program as they transition from high school, to college and graduate school and into their careers. Through LOFT, tens of thousands of students and young professionals (ages 16-35) are connected to each other and experts in their fields; participate in over 30 leadership trainings, industry-tailored symposia and workshops; and hundreds are placed into internships, mentorships, fellowships and full-time positions with Fortune 500 companies and government agencies; and a LOFTlab is being developed to support ideas and entrepreneurship for Latinos. Join and follow LOFT on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the Hispanic Heritage Foundation

The Hispanic Heritage Foundation – a nonprofit established by the White House in 1987 – inspires, prepares, and connects minority leaders in the classroom, community and workforce to meet America's priorities in 10 priority areas or Track. HHF also promotes cultural pride, accomplishment, and the great promise of the community through public awareness campaigns seen by millions. HHF is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has offices in Los Angeles, New York, Miami and the LOFT Institute is housed at Michigan State University (Visit www.HispanicHeritage.org).

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CONTACT:

Santiago Melli-Huber
SantiagoMH@HispanicHeritage.org