



Latino Youth Attends Princeton Program

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Chicago—Only 150 students across the country were selected to participate in the 2008 Junior Statesman Summer Scholars Program at Princeton University, including Roberto Saenz, a 16-year-old Latino student at East Aurora High School, who managed to reach that goal with the support of his family and community.

The youngest of three brothers, Roberto will be a senior this year at East Aurora, where he stands out for his high academic level and his involvement in extracurricular activities.

"It's difficult to help the children get ahead, especially where we live where there are a lot of drugs, gangs and school dropouts," said Catalina Saenz, Roberto's single mother, who is proud of having two of her three sons attending college.

Saenz said she feels very proud of Roberto's achievement of being selected to participate in this program, which is a preparatory summer experience that provides students with fundamental knowledge of politics and government.

According to the young student, who began his classes in this program at the University of Princeton in New Jersey on June 23, reaching his goal was not easy because he had to raise \$5,000 to cover the cost of registration.

"With the help of relatives, friends, and members of the community, we raised \$3,000, but we still were missing the rest," he said.

"One night he came home very excited, and he told me that he'd met Robert Renteria, a successful businessman who offered to help him," said the youth's mother.

Chance united Robert Renteria and Roberto Saenz, and when the latter explained his concern, the author of the book *From the Barrio to the Board Room* took the cause in his own hands and convened the Aurora Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to offer Roberto a scholarship that would complete the missing amount.

"This hadn't been done sooner because the scholarships awarded by the foundation of the Chamber of Commerce are for students in their senior year," said Renteria, who recounts the passage of a difficult childhood and adolescence involved with gangs in his autobiographical book.

His life was changed dramatically when his father—a drug addict who had abandoned him when he was only three years old—died, and he became a hard worker who today holds a privileged position as an entrepreneur and in his new role as author of the book that has inspired many youths—among them, Roberto Saenz.

"My commitment is with young people like [Roberto] who have the potential to become great leaders," said Renteria.

Saenz dreams of becoming a historian or professor and continues engaging in activities to benefit the community, school and church in order to reach his goal of studying at the University of Princeton.

"I know that I can achieve it," said Roberto.