

Scholarship Success Stories

Karen Arcado's Story

2016 recipient of the AAUW Healdsburg Branch SRJC Scholarship

An Educational Journey



In May of 2016, I graduated from Santa Rosa Junior College with my Associate Degree in Nursing. In June of that very same year, I began attending Sonoma State University. It had always been my goal to further my education by earning a bachelor's degree. I knew this additional knowledge and education would open more doors for me in my chosen career.

The Healdsburg AAUW branch graciously awarded me a scholarship to attend Sonoma State University in the amount of \$4000. This was instrumental in paying for my tuition and allowing me to focus on school and raising my four young children. Without this support, I would not have been able to attend Sonoma State, nor would I have earned a four-year degree.

In May 2017, I graduated from Sonoma State's Collaborative Nursing Education Continuum Model Post Licensure program with my bachelor's degree. I fulfilled my dream to become the first in my family to attend and graduate from a four-year university. I began working as a nurse at an acute care hospital on the Medical Surgical Unit in a socio-economically disadvantaged community, where my education makes a lasting impact on the health of my patients and their families.

In April of 2018 I began teaching part time as a clinical instructor for Pacific Union College. I provided support to the nursing students. I discovered a love for teaching.

In February of 2020 I took a position working in the Intensive Care Unit. It had been my dream to become an ICU Nurse, care for the sickest patients, provide comfort and healing. After just one month of orientation in the ICU, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and my world turned upside down. For two years I worked in the trenches, caring for very sick, isolated, and scared patients. It was heartbreaking to watch many succumb to a ruthless virus. The stress of worrying about bringing home the virus to my children was unbearable, but I carried on, putting my own fears aside to be there for my patients.

In October of 2021, I took a position working as a school nurse for the local school district. This was a welcome change. In order to qualify for the position, the State of California requires I have a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Next year I plan to attend Sacramento State University to earn my School Nurse Credential. It is interesting how experiences in life change the trajectory of our future. I thought I wanted to work in the ICU, but now I realize I can make a bigger impact working with students in kindergarten through twelfth grades. I work in a socio-economically disadvantaged community, providing education, preventive and medical care to students who otherwise do not have access to resources. I see the positive impact I am making for our future generation, and I know I am exactly where I am meant to be. I love what I do and come to work each day with love and gratitude.

I am grateful to the Healdsburg AAUW for awarding me a scholarship, believing in me, helping me to overcome poverty and adversity to pursue my dream. The impact you have is far reaching, as it not only affects me and my children, but each of my patients and all the students that I help along the way. Thank you for your generosity.

- Karen Arcado