

## Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation Student Interviews to Start

As Rossmoorians read this article, members of the Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) will be interviewing nearly 200 students from six local high schools and two community colleges who have applied for \$4,000 (up from \$3,500 last year) RSF scholarships. Because the number of applicants is so large this year, the 27 RSF trustees will be assisted by a group of “Friends” - past RSF officers who are already deeply experienced in the interviewing process.

Before interviewing, each interviewer will have reviewed students’ written applications, in which they show they have met the criteria for applying. They will all demonstrate they carry a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (weighted for high school applicants) and identify a federal Student Aid Index score that shows their degree of financial need.

Based on these criteria and on a reading of the essays each student is also required to write, RSF interviewers then craft a series of questions specific to each student interviewed. All interviewers carry an evaluation form into the interviews, on which they have already assessed students’ economic need (including their family’s earning capacity and employment situation) and their academic success (including the quality of their essays and evidence of academic rigor). The form also calls for an evaluation of the student’s particular qualities, challenges, and attributes. Acquiring this information shows why the 30-minute interviews are so important. Although the process is not easy, it’s in the interviews that RSF trustees and friends hear the incredible stories that so often populate RSF articles the Rossmoor News subsequently publishes.

Normally, the visiting team chair poses the first question the student hears in the interview; it is usually directed at something in the student’s essay. “It says here you’ve been living in a garage the past couple of months.” (That actually happened in an interview two years ago.) “What set of circumstances brought that about?” “How are things going since your former fellow prison inmates convinced you to turn your life around once you were released?” (Another actual question from several years ago.) “Tell us about the difficulties you have experienced in your education because you are a single mom?” (Over the years trustees have asked that one a lot.)

Other questions follow. “Describe your typical responsibilities and activities outside of school hours?” That one often reveals the number of hours per week a student needs to take care of siblings because both parents work. “Tell us about a time things did not go as you planned. What would you have done differently? What did you learn?” This one is particularly revealing—and telling—about the student’s commitment to a higher education. And the answer often leads to another interviewer to ask: “What would be your dream job? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?” RSF article in the News about past scholarship winners show many have fulfilled those dreams.

At a meeting next month RSF trustees will get together to make the final, albeit difficult, selections. At that meeting the stories the interviews solicited will be shared. Most trustees will smile, some will gasp, a few will shed a happy tear or two, but if past is prologue, all will marvel at the tenacity and commitment of the young people they just met. For trustees and friends, what they get from those interviews is ample payback for the hundreds of volunteer hours they devote each year to the Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation.

Submitted by: Wayne A. Wiegand, RSF Trustee