

Deserving PCHS seniors get laptops for college

By Jananne Abel

Port Chester High School is blessed with myriad scholarships and awards of all types and from many sources available to its graduating seniors to be used for the pursuit of higher education. New awards are continually being added including this year's To the Top with Laptops.

Through the program, five donated laptop computers and printers went to five students who have shown solid academic performance, commitment to the school community, character and integrity. They must be going off to college and not have the financial ability to afford a laptop.

A committee at the school got together to decide who would most benefit from this donation.

"Many colleges require students to buy laptops," said guidance counselor Andrea Davis, who worked with donors Robert Drechsler and son Alex of Rye Brook on designing the program and was part of the committee that chose the worthy recipients. "We know the kids very well who could benefit from it. They were good students who financially would benefit from having a laptop and possibly wouldn't have been able to purchase one."

It was on the occasion of his 13-year-old son's Bar Mitzvah at Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel in Port Chester that Robert Drechsler "started talking to him about giving back to the community and not all the nonsense of Bar Mitzvah parties." Of course, he had one of those, too. "We talked about giving a portion of his gifts and came up with giving laptop computers to college-bound students."

While they started the laptop program this year at Port Chester High School because it was close to home, they hope to grow it to two schools next year and possibly expand it to more schools in the future.

The Drechslers were so thrilled about the committee's choice of candidates they decided to add 3-in-one printers that scan, fax and copy to the package along with a Dell Notebook with all the software they



Juliana Miguel, Sherin Thomas, Yadira Alvarez and Charles Figueroa received laptops and printers at the Port Chester High School senior awards night on June 1 from Robert Drechsler (left) and his son Alex (far right) of Rye Brook. Michelle Vincoli, who did not attend the assembly, was also the beneficiary of a computer and printer through the Drechslers' new To the Top with Laptops program.

could want and a CD burner.

"They've had hard lives a lot of these kids," said Mr. Drechsler. "It's good for [Alex] to see how other people live and that everyone doesn't have the easy life he has."

Those selected to receive the computers and printers were Yadira Alvarez, Charles

Figueroa, Sherin Thomas, Juliana Miguel and Michelle Vincoli.

Alvarez came to Port Chester from Mexico in 2000, said her guidance counselor, Michael Rogers. She's an only child and the daughter of poor immigrants. An outstanding student figuring among the top 10 in her class who is also involved

in extracurricular activities like soccer, the Latinos Unidos Culture Club and the NFTE Business Program, "she's come a long way," Rogers said. She will be attending Columbia University.

Figueroa is a first generation American whose mother was born in Ecuador, said Davis, his counselor. He is a peer leader,

wrestler and "a wonderful young man," she said. He will be going to Iona College majoring in Business.

Thomas immigrated to the United States from India in November 2003 in good standing from her own country, said her guidance counselor, Maria Somers. She took three languages and jumped into intermediate level courses. She was elected to go to a program at the College of New Rochelle for the summer and will attend that school in the fall. She originally wanted to be a nurse but has since expanded her horizons in the medical field and is now interested in becoming a pediatrician.

Miguel "is a really humble young lady who did very well academically," said Byron Womack, her counselor. She is a solid "B" student. Juliana wasn't able to participate in any extracurricular activities because she came here from Brazil with her father, leaving her mother there, and she has been cooking and cleaning and taking care of her younger sister. "She gave up a lot of luxury and never complained," Womack said. "She made a lot of sacrifices for the betterment of her family." "A model student who leads by example," she will be attending the University of Hartford where she intends to take part in their pre-law program.

Vincoli, a student of limited means with a solid "B" average, was heavily involved in the band color guard, according to Kevin DelCampo, her guidance counselor. Her mother is a single mom and she has an older brother. Vincoli will be a student at Western Connecticut State University in the fall.

The Drechslers attended PCHS's June 1 senior awards night and personally presented the laptops and printers to the chosen recipients.

"The Port Chester High School community is very grateful to the Drechslers for recognizing our hardworking students," said Davis. "Their generosity is really going to help these students to begin their journey positively at school."