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# Future contributors

## Horatio Alger winners share strong traits

By **JASA SANTOS**  
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The winners of the 2008 Horatio Alger scholarship have one thing in common for certain — John O'Connor, the school district's college selection facilitator.

O'Connor encouraged Mandy Spriggs, Gabrielle Ridgeway and Swade Geiger to apply for the scholarship, which is one of the largest need-based financial aid programs in the country.

"He is just wonderful," Swade said. "John O'Conner, he is something else."

The students were recently named as winners of the scholarship, which awards \$5,000 for education expenses from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation.

Selection of winners is based on academic performance, strength of character,

commitment to college education and desire to contribute to society.

"I'm thankful that I got it," said Mandy, a Natrona County High School graduate who also won the Daniels Fund Scholarship this year. "I wasn't really expecting too."

Mandy will attend Casper College this fall and plans to study either law or criminal psychology. In her free time, Mandy studies dance and karate. While karate is a family activity, dancing is something Mandy does for fun.

"It's something you just do, and it makes you feel good when you're doing it," she said.

Gabrielle, also a NCHS graduate, will attend Metropolitan State College in Denver, a move her family supports.

"I think to learn about yourself ... you have to get away," she said. "I could go here [to Casper College] for free like everybody else, but you've got to expand your horizons."

Gabrielle plans to major in biology and minor in chemistry, a move she hopes to parlay into a career in forensic

science. After working for 30 hours a week during school, Gabrielle said she's thankful to be named a Horatio Alger winner.

"It's a good scholarship," she said.

Swade, who also is a Daniel's Fund winner, will attend the University of Southern California this fall. He plans to major in engineering, since math and science have always interested him.

"I've got some work ahead of me, I think," the Kelly Walsh High School graduate said. "It's where my hearts is at. I feel like I can make a career out of it."

Swade said he hopes other students realize finances shouldn't stop them from attending college.

"I had someone to help me," he said. "Be aware that there is help out there. I want people to know there are opportunities and you can make yourself a life."

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Swade Geiger, an employee at Sartford's Grub & Pub, opens an umbrella over a table on the restaurant's patio before they open for lunch on Thursday morning. Geiger was awarded the Horatio Alger scholarship and will attend USC this fall to study engineering.