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## Former Homeless Teen Wins Several Scholarships

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Among the thousands of student who graduated from high school this week, there was one story that caught FOX 9's attention. His name is Dionne Griffin. He is smart and gifted.

A couple of years ago, he was also poor and homeless. His is a story of determination, a generous stranger and a choice that would change his life.

There are moments and places that define us. For Dionne griffin, it's a curb along Victoria Street in St. Paul. At 15, Griffin was homeless, desperate and hungry.

He was thinking about shoplifting from a Holiday Station around the corner on west Seventh Street. But at that moment, fate in the form of a middle aged woman came driving down Victoria Street.

She said the right words at precisely the right time. She gave Griffin some money for food and told him to keep praying. He said that was an emotional turning point for him.

Griffin had spent his early years in Chicago, with his parents and six siblings. The happy days did not last long. Their home was in foreclosure. Then the family split apart.

Griffin's father and brother came to Minnesota to stay with relatives and relative strangers. But his life started moving in a different direction that day on the curb. Soon after the family had scraped together enough money to move into an apartment of their own, things were also turning around at school. Always a good student, Griffin became a great one. He rededicated himself to his studies at Humboldt High and earned a 4.1 grade point average.

He found supportive teachers, like French teacher Madame Dianne Hopen, who saw untapped potential.

"His brain is constantly tying things together not just from his course work also his life experience," said Hopen.

That experience would become an essay. That essay would help Griffin win the Horatio Alger scholarship. A few weeks ago, there was a trip to Washington, D.C. where he met other winners from around the country.

Soon he won other scholarships. He won the Dell, the Wallin and a Kirby Pucket scholarship. He has earned a total of \$72,000 for college.

He said it all really began with \$5 from a woman driving down the street. He'd never see her again.

"I think it's a little bit magical, maybe she was an angel," said Griffin. "I do believe in angels."

He's working full time at Ecolab, repairing computers. This fall at the University of Minnesota, he'll be majoring in economics and finance.