



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Sept. 5, 2019

### LAFCU awards LCC scholarships to women returning to school for new careers

*Credit union's fifth year of contest marks \$15K in awards helping adults build better futures*

LANSING, Mich. — Three women who see education as the direct path to a new career have been selected winners of the 2019 LAFCU Women Helping Educate Every Lady, or W.H.E.E.L., Scholarship Essay Contest.

The winners are Ericka González, Owosso; Kathleen Kelly, Holt; and Samantha Lee, Fowlerville. Each receives a \$1,000 scholarship to attend Lansing Community College (LCC). This is the fifth year W.H.E.E.L. scholarships have been awarded, providing a total of \$15,000 in scholarships to 15 women.

“This scholarship was founded in response to stories of women who needed higher education for re-employment or to move into new careers to improve their lives and those of their families,” said Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU chief marketing officer. “Coincidentally, this year’s winners are all pursuing a common passion of caring for others through a nursing vocation.

“Ericka, Kathleen and Samantha have each had emotional and moving experiences that resulted in a calling to serve others. They demonstrate it’s never too late to pursue a new career, and that it’s not starting over, but building upon one’s past to create a better future. LAFCU is proud to help in the journey.”

Winners were determined by their one-page essay about their career choice and inspiration to pursue



At the W.H.E.E.L. scholarship presentation are, from left, LAFCU CEO Pat Spyke; winners Kathleen Kelly and Samantha Lee displaying their winning essays; and LCC Foundation Interim Executive Director Toni Glasscoe.



Ericka González, center, receives a ceremonial check for winning one of three 2019 LAFCU W.H.E.E.L. scholarships from two members of the LAFCU Scholarship Review Committee.

that career.

**Ericka González** found a passion for nursing during her senior year at Michigan State University. Her life switched gears after regularly visiting a friend in the hospital for six months. The friend eventually passed away due to complications from injuries sustained in a house fire.

“The nurses who treated my friend were some of the kindest, most hard-working and unselfish people I ever met,” González said. “They help strangers through some of the hardest moments of their lives. I want to be someone who is fortunate to have those skills.”

She is in the second year of the LCC nursing–RN option associate program.

**Kathleen Kelly**’s career compass found its true north on the worst day of her life – the day of a problematic home birth that left her daughter without oxygen for countless minutes. Her daughter survived but still fights medical consequences from that day.

“Sitting next to my daughter in the intensive care unit, I knew with an unwavering sense of clarity that every decision in my life had prepared me to be a bedside nurse,” Kelly recalled. “I applied to LCC at that moment. The hundreds of ‘unknowns’ about my daughter’s outcome and in my life at the time were terrifying. But realizing I was certain to return to school for a second degree gave me a bit of solace.”

Kelly believes that every professional position she has held and the bachelor’s degree in Spanish and interpersonal communication she earned at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, are pillars that will help her provide positive and effective therapeutic communication. She’s entering LCC’s nursing–RN option associate program January 2020.

**Samantha Lee**, who has been a firefighter and paramedic for 11 years, is focused on the three semesters she’ll spend as a student in the advanced standing track for LCC’s nursing–RN option associate degree. This career shift for the mother of three daughters did not come easy.

“Becoming a nurse has long been a career goal, but having started a family, purchased a home and all the time and financial demands that come with those decisions dissuaded me from returning to school,” Lee said. “After evaluating my family life and being inspired by my mother who became a nurse at nearly 60 years of age, I knew the time was now.”

Nursing will allow Lee to continue in a profession that helps positively impact the lives of others and for her to grow professionally as well as to provide additional income and time for her family.

“The next year and a half will be extremely difficult – attending classes, working full time and raising my daughters. LAFCU’s support is truly appreciated,” she said.



LAFCU has awarded \$15,000 in scholarships through the W.H.E.E.L. Essay Contest since it was founded.

LAFCU's W.H.E.E.L. program encourages women to pursue the education needed to enter or re-enter the workforce or to advance their careers. Applicants must have been a resident of Michigan, LAFCU's geographical service area. The scholarships support the credit union's long-standing 'people helping people' mission.

**About LAFCU**

Chartered in 1936, LAFCU is a not-for-profit financial cooperative open for membership to anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in Michigan and to businesses and other entities located in Michigan. The credit union serves more than 65,000 members and holds nearly \$750 million in assets. LAFCU offers a comprehensive range of financial products and services as well as an expanding complement of financial technology solutions. Members enjoy benefits such as low fees, low interest rates on loans, high yields on savings, discounts, knowledgeable employees and nationwide access to fee-free ATMs and ITMs. A recipient of the national Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award for credit unions, LAFCU enriches the communities it serves by supporting many organizations and causes. To learn more about LAFCU, call 800.748.0228 or visit [www.lafcu.com](http://www.lafcu.com).

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