Maggie Gee was a trailblazing WWII pilot, physicist, Congressional Committee member who, in a typically generous gesture, bequeathed funds to Berkeley. The Bridge program, founded in 2010, recruits students like Michelle. The Bridge program, founded in 2010, recruits students like Michelle. Michelle Shannon is majoring in computer engineering at Sacramento State University as the 2014 Maggie Gee High Hopes Scholar. Michelle Shannon is majoring in computer engineering at Sacramento State University as the 2014 Maggie Gee High Hopes Scholar. Michelle was eleven years old and decided to deconstruct and repair a broken laptop her mother gave her. Michelle traces her interest in computers back to when she was eleven years old and decided to deconstruct and repair a broken laptop her mother gave her. She enthusiastically describes her fascination with the sleekness of its interior and all the action contained within. She fixed that computer and loved using it to play video games and explore the program files used to create those games. As a high school junior, Michelle made up her mind that one day she was going to work at Google or an equally fast-paced tech company with the ability to harness evolving technology. She realized she would need to go to college to achieve that goal. She taught herself some coding and programming, including C++, Java, and HTML, before starting college. Michelle also wants to build and work with circuitry, cars and mechanics and perhaps combine these with her interest in computer technology. Environmental Science is Michelle’s favorite class this semester because it combines the outdoors with a teaching environment. It reminds her of Berkeley’s Adventure Playground, where she spent many hours working and building with children. “No other place has children using hammers, saws and paint to express themselves creatively. I had the chance to help them out and be a part of it,” she says proudly.

Maggie Gee was a trailblazing WWII pilot, physicist, Congressional Committee member who, in a typically generous gesture, bequeathed funds to Berkeley. The Bridge program, founded in 2010, recruits students like Michelle. Michelle’s highest aspiration is to be a computer scientist like her role model, Dr. Margaret Hamilton. As a child, Michelle was interested in computers and spent hours at Berkeley’s Adventure Playground, where she built and fixed broken things. She taught herself some coding and programming, including C++, Java, and HTML, before starting college.

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A Note from Lynn Walker

I am three months into my new position as the part-time College Success Coordinator. I feel lucky to be part of a community of passionate individuals dedicated to helping a group of extraordi-

Before joining the Berkeley Community Fund, I received my BS in psychology from Carnegie Mellon University and my MS in social work from the University of Texas at Austin. I worked in program development for several government and nonprofit organizations, including the Fire Department of New York and a Bay Area social policy research firm. One of my most rewarding jobs was managing a program for adolescents in the child welfare system in New York City. This experience inspired me to return to youth development and get my certificate in College Admissions and Career Planning from the UC Berkeley Extension program.

I spent the summer getting to know some of our scholars and mentors, beginning with the new scholar orientation in July. Summer was a good time to meet with them face-to-face before they headed off to school. I worked with students to resolve issues with financial aid, developed plans for those who needed help getting back on track, and followed up on issues reported in their spring updates. I also assisted several scholars in reconnecting with their mentors.

This fall, I am focusing on career planning efforts, helping upperclassmen develop connections in their fields, polish their resumes, or find internships. Our mentors and board members offer a rich array of skills, professional knowledge and connections that scholars tap into. (If you’re interested to learn more about this, please contact me at lynn@berkfund.org.) I am also getting to know the alumni of our program, bringing them as continuing members of our community. Bisrat Tekie (Sarah Lawrence, 2013) is the first of our former scholars to join our mentor corps. Other recent graduates have been helping us with various projects, including conducting community outreach to Berkeley High School and participating in BCF events.

As part of our community outreach, I recently had the pleasure of speaking to parents at Berkeley High's Bridge program about why our children should apply for a High Hopes Scholarship. Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz (a 2013 scholarship recipient) joined me to speak about how our program opened doors for her. This spring she will finish her studies at UC Santa Cruz by working for a nonprofit in Mexico. She encouraged students to find a career path that "speaks to their hearts." I could not have found better words to express my wishes for all of our High Hopes Scholars.

Special thanks go to BCF co-founder, chairman emeritus and Wheeler Medalist (2011) Narsai David for emceeing the event once again with great warmth and humor. We were pleased that past Wheeler medalists, Davida Coady, MD (2002), Donny Abram (2003) and Susan Medak (2012) joined the festivities, too.

Planning is already underway for next year’s dinner. Mark your calendar for Thursday, October 8, 2015.

21st Annual Dinner Raised More than $300k for Scholarship Programs

WHAT A WONDERFUL CELEBRATION!

More than 300 friends, old and new, joined us in honoring environmental scientist and mountaineer Dr. Arlene Blum with the 2014 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award at our 21st Annual Berkeley Community Fund Dinner. In her acceptance speech, which received a standing ovation, Dr. Blum shared how important mentors were to her success as a chemist and mountaineer as well as how persistence pays off. Both are important messages to our High Hopes scholars.

Proceeds from the event go to our High Hopes Scholarship Program. We raised over $300,000, an incredibly inspiring start to our newly launched High Hopes 100 Initiative! Thank you, everyone, for your generous support in helping our program. As one of our scholars said, “It is so motivational and good to know there are people who believe in me and support my dreams.” Events like this remind us how the power of community is instrumental to change as well as what we love about Berkeley.

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WHO WE ARE | The Berkeley Community Fund (BCF) is a 501(c)3 established in 1991 by a group whose love for Berkeley and a community of hope and equity inspired them to set up a fund to reflect their goals. Since 2000, we have been focusing on providing scholarships and mentoring support to promising Berkeley High School students attending four-year colleges and universities. We envision a future in which all Berkeley youth succeed in developing to their full potential and in sharing positive, enriched lives with our community and the world.

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Join BCF Board of Directors

We're thrilled to welcome three new directors to our board:

Oseyi Ikuenobe, Victoria Robinson and Rachelle Owen

Oseyi Ikuenobe, Victoria Robinson and Rachelle Owen joined BCF Board of Directors.

Victoria Robinson has worked in many facets of fund development over the past 30 years including annual appeals, corporate and foundation fund raising, and major gifts. She has been fortunate to develop her experience in a wide variety of settings, including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, San Francisco Opera, Oakland Ballet, Stanford University, UC San Francisco, Jewish Vocational Services, and the Level Playing Field Institute. Over the years she has volunteered for the River City Theater Company, the East Sacramento Heritage Group, Sacramento Country Day School, and Head Royce School. In addition to serving on our board, Victoria also oversees stewardship at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Oakland.

The common thread of Rachelle Owen’s varied careers is a commitment to helping people. She began as a teacher in the Oakland school system before landing a job as the Chief Administrator for Twin Pine’s Elementary, a private school in Oakland run by noted philanthropist Margaret Alafi. After moving to the East Coast she continued teaching, this time for a small private school in Greenwich, Connecticut. At 50, she returned to graduate school and received her MSw from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University in NYC. Rachelle later became the Director of Adult & Senior Services for Jewish Family Services of Greenwich. She also found time to volunteer for the Red Cross and spent three weeks in Louisiana serving the Baton Rouge community after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

When she moved back to the Bay Area, Rachelle continued her relationship with the Red Cross as the Field Instructor for their U.S. MSW intern. She also served on the Executive Board of Bay Area Community Services (BACS), an organization which delivers support services to marginalized adults and teens throughout the East Bay.