

FAU's Kenan Social Engagement Program Announces Scholarship Winners for 2017-2018

The Kenan Social Engagement Program at the Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University is pleased to announce the selection of three new scholarship winners. These scholarship recipients, or Kenan Scholars, have been chosen as part of a competitive selection process to launch social ventures that they conceptualized and planned in the Fall 2017 semester under the tutelage of program co-directors Timothy Steigenga and Christopher Strain, both professors at the Wilkes Honors College.

R.J. Muniz, a political science major, is the 2018 winner of a \$10,000 seed grant to launch his social enterprise, *Southpaw Prince*, a non-profit after-school boxing program for at-risk youth that focuses on discipline, character building, and mentorship. As R.J. explains, "our deep belief at *Southpaw Prince* is that if low-income children are placed in an environment where they can thrive and participate in a healthy activity, they can create a pathway to immediate and future success".



R.J. brings a wealth of first-hand experience to his 501c3 venture. He began competing as a boxer at the age of fifteen. In 2012 R.J., the "Southpaw Prince," became the Florida Silver Gloves champion. In 2013 he became the Florida State PAL Champion, Southeast Silver Gloves Champion, Florida and Southeast Junior Olympic Champion, won a bronze medal at the Junior Olympics and became nationally ranked. R.J. began competing on the collegiate level in 2016 and in that same year he became the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association national champion in the 165 lbs. division. R.J. is passionate about providing access to this afterschool program for underprivileged young people. Reflecting on his own experience, R.J. notes that "boxing is unique because it requires a high level of stamina and discipline. It also teaches participants how to be resilient, how to win under pressure, and how to channel aggression. Most importantly, our trainers also become mentors to provide accountability and support for our students".



Wilkes Honors College students Ashley Zito and Reece Humphreys also each won \$2500 to start their respective ventures: *Shangri-La Equine*, a horse retirement farm and rescue operation that also provides equine therapy for disabled children; and *BookMe*, a resource-sharing app for nonprofit agencies that leverages underutilized resources via the sharing economy.

Each year, the Kenan Social Engagement Program enters an agreement with a local area nonprofit agency, or community partner. Students volunteer at the community partner; staff at the community partner in turn mentor the student volunteers. Additionally, the students write business plans tailored not only to serve the mission of the community partner but also to create revenue

streams for that nonprofit agency, making it less dependent on charitable donations and more economically self-sufficient. Community partners that have participated in the Kenan Social Engagement Program include the El Sol Neighborhood Resource Center, a day-labor center founded to aid the local immigrant community in northern Palm Beach County; The Lord's Place, a nonprofit, non-sectarian organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness in Palm Beach County; the Palm Beach County Food Bank, which provides food for area food pantries and soup kitchens; the Town of Jupiter; and Easterseals Florida, a national organization that provides community-based services for people with disabilities. Now in its sixth year, the Kenan Social Engagement program is funded by a grant and endowment by the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. For more information on the program and the matching grant challenge see: <http://www.fau.edu/honors/visitors/kenan-social-engagement-program.php>