## Inspiration in Education

Ask any young woman graduating from high school or college about the career options she is considering, and she may be able to give you quite a long list. But that was not always the case. When I spoke with Janet Chaniot, teacher and Mendocino College board member, she recalled a different time. "When I graduated from high school and college, career options for women were limited. I considered journalism and teaching and, after working on the Michigan Daily at the University of Michigan, I decided I liked teaching better. It was a good choice."

Janet is a member of the California Retired Teachers' Association (CRTA), an organization that holds two scholarship funds at the Community Foundation – The Bessie Scott Scholarship for young people going into education, and the Hilmer Finne Scholarship for those pursuing musical education. "The local chapters of the CRTA do whatever they can to promote education," says Janet. "It is one of the ways we "give back" in our local community."

Janet retired in 1997, but didn't stay retired long. She returned to teaching after just a few years and currently teaches English and AP US History at The City of 10,000 Buddhas. She notes it takes a special person to be a good teacher. "You have to like kids," she told me. "And it's not always easy being in front of a group of people who may not want to be in your classroom, but it is so rewarding. That is why I continue to teach. As career choices expand, it has become more important to encourage top notch students to make the field of education their first choice."

Janet was recruited by the late Evelyn Broadus to be on the selection committee for the CRTA scholarships and has been impressed by the applicants each year. "Many of the students who apply for the teachers' scholarships have decided early in their lives that they want to teach," Janet told me. "Many students have done peer tutoring, or volunteer in a Sunday school or nursery school. By the time they graduate, they know it is what they want to do."

In the past, the Bessie Scott Scholarship and Hilmer Finne Music Scholarship have gone to students like Olivia Pratt and Julian McClanahan. Olivia is a graduate of Ukiah High School who has been tutoring since she was in seventh grade. In her essay, Olivia explains that a chemistry teacher in her sophomore year "ignited my interest in the physical sciences." She goes on to explain, "I hope to open doors by giving (my students) that same inspiration that I experienced in chemistry class."

Julian's courage and determination helped him to recover from a difficult sports injury. He writes, "In many ways I'm thankful for this obstacle. It paused my life, yet now I'm focused on what I know is my goal in life; to heal the world through my music."

"Julian and Olivia were strong candidates," Janet says. "They both have the drive to succeed. It is a complex process when you put five educators in a room and ask them to agree on a scholarship winner. It is miraculous how we all come to consensus."