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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CALOPTIMA EMPLOYEES AWARD THREE SCHOLARSHIPS  
TO MEMBERS PURSUING HEALTH CARE CAREERS**

*Local winners include an aspiring pharmacist, doctor and nurse*

**ORANGE, California (July 11, 2016)** — CalOptima employees are dedicated to the mission of providing CalOptima members with access to quality health care, and now they have done even more. The CalOptima Employee Activities Committee (EAC) offered a scholarship essay contest to give members an opportunity to win a scholarship to fund their education. The contest was developed as part of CalOptima’s 20th anniversary celebration and was funded solely through fundraising activities conducted by the EAC.

The scholarship contest was open to members of all ages pursuing a degree in health care or social services. Members were asked to share in their essays how they have benefited from CalOptima’s services, how their current studies will help them in the field of health care or social services, and why they are a good candidate to receive the scholarship.

Meet the scholarship winners and read an excerpt from their essays below:

**First Place \$1,000 Scholarship Winner:**

**Melody Ra, a first-year pharmacy student at Chapman University and a resident of Yorba Linda**



“I am ecstatic to enter the field of pharmacy for it offers a boundless array of opportunities to assist the community. My scientific education will help me formulate potential life-saving medications. This knowledge could combat medical illnesses and restore people’s health. The dynamic field of pharmacy will never stop improving, and new innovations will constantly be available to help people. Pharmacists play a vital role in people’s lives. I will have the power of healing and intervening in their health. To me, this interaction is priceless.”

—more—

**Second Place \$750 Scholarship Winner:**

**Alejandra Ruiz, a high school graduate from Costa Mesa, heading to Hollins University in Virginia in the fall**



“CalOptima services and supports have benefited me in many ways. CalOptima approved for me to see a nutritionist. Being overweight always made me feel out of place, and I had very low self-esteem. Ever since I have [seen] my nutritionist, I feel like I have a reason for living. I feel more energetic and my self-esteem has never been this high. I wake up some mornings and feel beautiful and have self-worth now. I have a bright future ahead of me [as a pre-med student], and none of this would have been possible

without CalOptima. I know I have a long road ahead of me, but I am ready for this journey.”

**Third Place \$500 Scholarship Winner:**

**Michelle Spargur, a mother of three living in Orange, enrolled in the Cal State Fullerton School of Nursing**



“CalOptima has been a wonderful resource for my family over the years. Through this program, my children have had access to the best doctors and health care facilities. However, I don’t get the feeling that CalOptima is just about doctor appointments and well-child visits. CalOptima provides so much more because they are interested in the overall health and well-being of my family. I particularly enjoy the newsletters that I receive that provide information about healthy eating and exercise. I often get good

ideas from the mailing about limiting screen time, cooking recipes for delicious meals that my kids will enjoy, and getting my kids outside and participating in physical activity.”

CalOptima CEO Michael Schrader praised the efforts of the CalOptima EAC, noting how the contest reflects employees’ commitment to serve Orange County. “Employees’ compassion shows in their day-to-day work supporting the health of our members, and this contest provided a special way to help members with their personal endeavors, too,” Schrader said. “Through our employees’ collaborative efforts and financial contributions, three members are closer to achieving their educational goals. CalOptima is proud to be making an impact on our community by supporting the health care leaders of tomorrow.”

To view a video about the winners, click [here](#).

To learn more about CalOptima, visit [www.caloptima.org](http://www.caloptima.org).

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**About CalOptima**

A county organized health system, CalOptima provides publicly funded health care coverage for low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities in Orange County, California. CalOptima’s mission is to provide members with access to quality health care services delivered in a cost-effective and compassionate manner. In total, CalOptima serves more than 785,000 members with a network of more than 7,000 primary care doctors and specialists, as well as 30 hospitals.