

Lunch will honor Faces of Success

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School has been tough for Alex Lopez who had a learning disability that impaired his reading and made it difficult to remember details.

But through the help of the Arizona Women's Education and Employment organization's Aspire Youth program he is on his way to graduating from the Maricopa Skills Center.

He will be honored Nov. 6 at the 14th annual Faces of Success Luncheon for his success along with Gail Rossi of Scottsdale and Dana Whitworth of Gilbert for overcoming adversity to transform their lives.

Lopez strived to become the first member of his family to finish high school. He also wanted to help his single mom, who worked as a hotel housekeeper to support Alex and his six siblings.

All of this seemed impossibly out of reach until Lopez -at age 16- contacted AWEE. Soon afterward, he signed up for AWEE's Aspire Youth Program, which offers mentoring, leadership development training, tutoring and other services for young adults.

"I never thought I would be able to go to college, but AWEE helped make my dream a reality."

Today, Lopez is excelling in his studies and excited at the prospect of finding a sales associate job with a car dealer after he graduates in February.

The luncheon also will honor the

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group's first award winner, Josie Madrid of Guadalupe, who was first recognized in 2000. In addition, the Jeanne L. Herberger Award will be given to former Northern Arizona University President Clara Lovett, for going above and beyond in contributing to the community and women.

At the luncheon, the honorees will describe the life challenges they faced and talk about how their lives have changed since participating in the organization's workforce and life skills programs.

Rossi's case manager, Brenda Young, provided support in getting her a job and gave her encouragement.

"She was pretty self-motivated about getting a job and doing what she needed to do," Young said. "She would take any suggestion to better herself."

Since getting help from Young and completing programs, Rossi has landed a job as a legal assistant and is taking college courses to earn a degree.

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