



THE SARATOGA PALIO

Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race

DATE
8.6.10

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For Immediate Release

**THE MELANIE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT:
*Meredith Cregg-Wedmore***

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY, August 6, 2010—The Melanie Foundation has announced that Meredith Cregg-Wedmore, of New Jersey, is this year's recipient of the foundation's annual scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to the applicant who best demonstrates the commitment to assist communities in a manner consistent with Melanie Merola O'Donnell's values of compassion, generosity, respect, and honesty. Applicants are required to be enrolled in graduate-level studies in the mental health field.

Cregg-Wedmore is a doctoral student in psychology at Rutgers University and holds a master's degree in psychology from Rutgers University. She also holds a master's degree in counseling and a bachelor's degree in psychology from The College of New Jersey. She is passionate about improving school psychology in order to provide effective support and interventions for individuals, as well as work to improve and reform the systems within which children with disabilities receive services.

Cregg-Wedmore believes that school psychology is at the intersection of mental health, education and individuals with disabilities, and seeks to be a leader in this field. She has worked in various educational and community-based settings, even spending a year as an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow working to expand service-learning in K-12 settings. She has worked as a social worker with Head Start and volunteered as a Big Sister to a child in special education. During her first year as a doctoral student, Cregg-Wedmore was awarded a competitive training fellowship through the US Department of Education designed to prepare school psychologists in systems-level practice and as future leaders.

Cregg-Wedmore was previously a project coordinator in the Research Laboratory for Resilience and Early Childhood Development at Rutgers University. Her child development and volunteer experience includes volunteer and mentor positions at The Developmental Center for Infants and Children, where she researched and developed literacy programs for children with



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disabilities ages 0-3 and their families; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Florida, where she encouraged the development of emotional, social, educational and physical well being for young children; Womenspace, where she planned creative and recreational activities for children from families experiencing domestic violence; and in multiple pre-K exception education classrooms observing and assisting children ages 3-5 with varying exceptionalities.

“The board of The Melanie Foundation is thrilled to award a scholarship to Meredith Cregg-Wedmore,” said George O'Donnell, president of the foundation. “Through her long-standing commitment to community service and volunteer work, as well as her work experiences, she demonstrates a tremendous passion for helping people. We're convinced that she is going to make a real impact on the lives of the people she touches because it's evident she has challenged herself to become a better professional, serving children and families, in this field. We're thrilled to be able to support her in doing so.”

In addition to awarding a scholarship, The Melanie Foundation plans to share its success with other community charities, this year supporting the inpatient mental health unit at Saratoga Hospital, a nonprofit foundation that provides support services for individuals with disabilities and their families.

For more information on the scholarship or to register for The Saratoga Palio: Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race on September 19 in Saratoga Springs, NY, visit www.thesaratogapalio.com.

The Saratogian is a key media sponsor of this year's race.

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About Melanie Merola O'Donnell

Melanie Merola O'Donnell lived an inspirational life, and though it was cut short, it was extremely full. Throughout her life, Melanie worked to help people in need. She volunteered with, and later became a staff member of, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, and she was a board member of the Capital Area Crisis Response Team for 8 years. She trained crisis responders for both organizations until 2004. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Melanie coordinated and managed 28 crisis response teams in New York City and 8 teams in Washington. She also aided crisis responders in Somerset County, PA, following the attacks. She spent several weeks in New York City, helping grieving families who were visiting the site of the attacks and coping with the aftermath. She provided care to individuals affected by natural disasters, plane crashes, school violence, the civil war in Sierra Leone, workplace violence, and homicide. In June 2004, she was honored by CACRT as the first recipient of the Melanie Merola O'Donnell Award for Excellence. At the time of her death, she was enrolled in a doctoral program in clinical psychology at Antioch University New England, in Keene, NH. Amidst Melanie's professional responsibilities and accomplishments, her devotion to her husband, son, mother, father, sister, family, and friends was never compromised.

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About the Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Scholarship Fund

The fund was created with the principal purpose of extending Melanie Merola O'Donnell's legacy of helping others through caring and compassionate mental healthcare, with a particular focus on enhancing a sense of community. O'Donnell's family and friends have joined together to celebrate her life with this cause, hoping to identify others who share O'Donnell's commitment to helping those in need, and providing those individuals financial assistance for the pursuit of graduate degrees in a mental health field.