

Good evening everyone, my name is Jennifer Cuevas and I am a junior at San Miguel High School. I am here tonight to present my point of view of my Catholic high school life. At San Miguel, I have grown as a person, I have improved my confidence level, and I have been offered many opportunities.

A big contribution to this life is my involvement in school. Since freshman year I have been involved in several clubs and shown my commitment. At this moment I am involved in 7 clubs and a manager for the boys' soccer and baseball teams. Each activity that I am involved in has taught me something or encouraged me to do better. Lasallian Youth has allowed me to be connected to my community and promote our faith through service, fun activities offered to students, and random acts of kindness.

For example, during the holidays we encouraged students to bring canned food and, as a thank you, we gave students bags of goodies to brighten their day. Student Life has allowed me to stay connected to my fellow classmates. I am the director of spirit and rallies promoting spirit among the students. I love this role because through pep rallies, lunch games and tailgates, I can bring a smile to someone's day.

This year, I participate in 3 honor societies at school: Spanish, English and the National Honor Society. In each society, the goal is to give back to the community through service. In addition, we are representatives to the student body setting the example by maintaining good grades and being role models. I am also part of the Student Ambassadors, representing San Miguel to its community by giving tours and going to events such as this one. Lastly, I'm involved in the Environmental Club where we explore and appreciate what Mother Nature has given us.

All of these clubs have taught me to be thankful that I am growing up to be a strong adult. On a daily basis, we face problems with poverty, health or family issues and still show a smile on our faces. This makes me happy and I am blessed to have my friends. Therefore, I love my life.

There are also opportunities I have been given that I would never have encountered on my own. Thanks to my involvement in Lasallian Youth, during two different summers, I was able to travel to New Orleans, Louisiana, and Portland, Oregon, each lasting a week to learn about a social justice issue. When I went to New Orleans, I learned about incarceration and, in Portland, I learned about human trafficking. These are both important topics that need to be highlighted by society and exposed to students so that we can take action.

During each trip, I served the community while learning about the issues and getting informed before I brought that knowledge back to my school. Learning about these issues was meaningful to me because there is no room for injustice in my world. I want to be the voice for those who do not have one. These enrichment programs opened me up to reality, encouraging me to take action and help those in need.

I was also able to travel to St. Mary's College in California for the Lasallian Student leaders conference and learned tips on how to be a good representative to my community. Each of these experiences has boosted my confidence in making friends with those across the country and understanding how everyone is different.

Finally, I currently do my work study program at the City of Tucson Planning and Development Services. I am a receptionist and help my coworkers with their duties. My job at the City of Tucson has allowed me to interact with different types of people and learn the importance of customer service in a professional field. I've worked there since I was 14 and luckily I've had the opportunity to work during holiday and summer breaks as well. My job has really opened me up to finding my way around problems when faced with complicated situations.

None of these experiences could be possible had it not been for the Arizona tax credits. Because of people here in Arizona who recommended their tax dollars, students like me can have an out-standing Catholic education that will change their life and make sure they are college and career ready.

San Miguel is part of the Cristo Rey Network and we are known to be a Catholic school. And like you all here tonight, I truly believe a Catholic education is most important because it helps us come together. At San Miguel, we believe in our 5 Lasallian core principles: Faith in the presence of God, concern for the poor and social justice, inclusive community, quality education and respect for all persons. All things needed to have good character to be a responsible citizen in this world.

Coming from a public school, I truly believe I am cared for and valued as a student at San Miguel. At my previous school, it was harder to concentrate because there were so many students in my classroom. The community at San Miguel is different. I constantly have the support of my classmates, faculty, and staff, knowing I can always ask for help and receive it. I've certainly grown as a person here and have created relationships with people that have allowed me to be myself.

At San Miguel, I feel that students appreciate being there and want to learn. They all have the same goal as me and that is to continue their education. My dream college

is Georgetown University in Washington DC because of their academic programs that can offer me a great education. I... am...on the path to obtain scholarships and maybe even a full ride.

I will be the first in my family to go to college and I want to set an example to my younger brother who just started high school. As a Latina, I am determined to get far in life and make those around me proud. I will continue making smart choices so that I can go to college, study and then travel the world. I know it will not be easy. I will have lots of obstacles however, I know I have the support and skills to conquer the barriers in order to get to my destination. Like Walt Disney once said "*If you can dream it, you can do it.*"

*Thank you for your time, my name is Jennifer Cuevas and I... am... a student at a Catholic High School.*