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Stanford senior nabs prestigious Truman Scholarship

Johnny Madrid, an undergraduate majoring in urban studies who has lived much of his life in the California foster care system, is one of 77 students selected nationwide for the prestigious Truman Scholarship.

The mission of the Washington, D.C.-based Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation is to recognize college juniors with exceptional leadership potential and intellectual ability who are committed to careers in the government, nonprofit and advocacy, or education sectors. Congress awards the \$26,000 scholarship to provide qualified students with financial support for graduate study and leadership training.

During his time at Stanford, Madrid has worked steadily on his mission to improve the conditions of youth in foster care throughout the United States. He has trained more than 150 social workers and facilitated dozens of focus groups with foster youth; he drafted language for the Foster Care Bill of Rights, which became law in 2001; and he has given speeches on foster issues from Washington, D.C., to Louisiana to Colorado.

At the age of 11, Madrid entered the California foster care system after his mother was killed by a drunk driver. He lived in 19 different homes, including 14 foster homes, before coming to Stanford. Madrid sees himself as lucky, however, pointing to the fact that statistics show that only a small percentage of foster youth enter higher education.

"He's a remarkable individual with enormous charisma and potential to bring about change in the world," said Susie Brubaker-Cole, director of Undergraduate Research Programs and a member of Stanford's Truman Scholarship nomination committee. "The Truman Foundation national secretary once told us that they look for someone who is full of 'piss and vinegar.' Johnny isn't afraid to stand up for what he believes in, no matter whom he's faced with."

