



## **Scholarship Funds Help Students Achieve Their Dreams**

Janai McDonald and Angelica Belica were each awarded a \$1,500 scholarship this year by the Tamarac Optimist Club. The Club recognizes two UNC Center for Urban Education students each year for their accomplishments and drive to attain their goals. The funds were added to the

## **Angelica Belica**

Belica started her studies in August 2023 and is earning a degree in special education. She intends to teach elementary school at Indiana School for the Deaf once she finishes her degree. "I'm excited to see the smiles of my students and witness their achievements," said Belica.

Since childhood, Belica's dream has been to become a teacher. "School was always a safe haven for me, and I aspired to create the same environment for my future deaf students," said Belica.

Belica appreciates the hands-on learning opportunities at CUE. She is gaining real-world experience and applying what she learns in the classroom. Working closely with teachers also provides invaluable insights and mentorship. "Dr. Fulton is a fantastic director," Belica added.

Belica was surprised and pleased to receive the scholarship from the Optimist Club. Juggling her roles as a mom, student, and paraprofessional has been challenging. "This award will help me



*CUE teacher candidate and Optimist Club of Tamarac scholarship recipient, Janai McDonald*

## **Janai McDonald**

McDonald has attended classes at CUE since spring of 2022 and is studying elementary education with a focus on liberal arts. She has always wanted to work with young people.

"I had many opportunities as a young, Black female," said McDonald. "I have had good mentors and have been surrounded by people who pushed me to not only be successful but to find my passion along the way. I have read about the historical inequities for young students of color. I want to be the educator and leader that students can count on to help eliminate some of those barriers."

Before she enrolled at CUE, McDonald was working and volunteering at a K-8 charter school. The executive principal Chris Denmark saw potential in McDonald and told her about CUE, where she could pursue a degree and then become a teacher. McDonald said, "After learning more about the program and meeting the amazing staff, I realized that I had a great opportunity to turn my passion into a career."

McDonald appreciates the small class sizes and the opportunities for "intimate teamwork" at CUE. McDonald says she has direct, easy access to the professors and administrators, which is important to her. "I don't want to be just another number in a large classroom," said McDonald. "I want my professors to know me, especially because of my disability. I want my professors to know how I learn and encourage me to always do better."

After she has finished her degree, McDonald wants to continue her work at Compound of Compassion, a community non-profit organization that works with young Black/Brown students. She also intends to teach at "the right school, with the right demographics, so I can help break