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Photo by Kate Mackley

Erin Hendricks, Yichuan Lu, Elsa Olvera, Taly Haffar, and, front, Woodrow ESL instructor Marjorie Shaw

Woodrow Awards Ipiña Scholarship

Posted May 7, 2008, 3:00 a.m. by Liz Mackinnon

Since the [Gustavo Ipiña Memorial Scholarship](#) was established, it has become a focal point of the Cinco de Mayo celebration at Woodrow Wilson High School.

Each year, the scholarship is awarded to an English as a second language, ESL, student who demonstrates not only academic achievement but also the spirit and determination characteristic of the Gustavo Ipiña legacy.

This year, two graduating seniors were chosen from several applicants for the \$5,000 academic award.

Elsa Olvera was encouraged to apply for the scholarship by her sister, Lizeth, last year's recipient. Olvera was on stage twice during the evening — to receive her award and to dance in a segment of the [Ballet Folklorico](#) program.

Olvera will attend Eastfield College in the fall, where she will focus on fulfilling her basic coursework before moving on to the university level. She plans to major in education and be a teacher some day.

Olvera never knew Gustavo Ipiña, but she is aware of the legacy he left behind.

"He was a good student, he liked school, but he didn't have the opportunities that I have," she said.

Federal prosecutor and scholarship founder Taly Haffar was amazed at the similarities between Olvera and Ipiña.

"She's always smiling, she's very outgoing, has tons of friends, really good in school," he said. "And a lot of her teachers describe her as being just like Gustavo."

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Photo by Kate Mackley

The second scholarship recipient also exemplified the qualities Haffar, and fellow prosecutor and scholarship coordinator Erin Hendricks, were looking for.

Yichuan Lu, 17, is the first Asian-American student to win. Lu came to America from Beijing three years ago, and has already accomplished more than many high school students.

"Academically, Yichuan is absolutely amazing," Haffar said. "To go from an ESL-level course to all AP level classes in three years and [to] graduating early is just really impressive."

Lu will attend the University of Texas at Dallas in the fall, where he will major in engineering. Receiving the award was "very exciting," Lu said, but having an unexpected guest in the audience, made the evening extra special.

"I just saw my dad, I was really surprised because he had said to me, 'Oh, I have something else to do,' and then he actually was here."

Last year's recipient, Lizeth Olvera briefly addressed the audience, telling them how much the scholarship had helped her through her first year at Richland College. She plans to move on to the university of Texas at Dallas, where she will major in business or nursing.

The evening was marked by mixed emotions for members of the Ipiña family as well as people who came to know Gustavo only through stories. The crowd was reminded of the Woodrow student who had so many hopes and dreams that went unfulfilled.

On stage, Taly Haffar stood next to Rosa Ipiña, Gustavo's mother. He carried a wooden plaque displaying a proclamation signed by Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert declaring Dec. 2, 2007, Gustavo Ipiña Day.

Haffar waited five months for the right time to present the gift to Mrs. Ipiña. Because, [May 5](#) was not only a celebration of Mexico's heritage and history, highlighted by commemorating the Battle of Puebla on that date in 1862, it was a night to celebrate the life of one her native sons.

It was also an opportunity to reward the achievements of two students who are like him.

Gustavo Ipiña was killed on Aug. 9, 2004, in what would later be described as a road-rage incident; he was only one week away from his senior year at Woodrow.

To donate to the Gustavo Ipiña Memorial Scholarship Fund, [e-mail Taly Haffar](#).



Photo by Kate Mackley
Yichuan Lu and Elsa Olvera earned this year's Gustavo Ipiña Memorial Scholarship.



Photo by Kate Mackley
One of the youngest members of the Ipiña family watches the awards ceremony.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Rosa Ipiña, Gustavo's mother, congratulates Yichuan Lu.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Taly Haffar presents to Rosa Ipiña a plaque designating Dec. 2 Gustavo Ipiña Day in Dallas as declared by Mayor Tom Leppert, while Woodrow Principal Ruth Vail, far left, and friends look on.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Rosa Ipiña looks over the plaque declaring Dec. 2 Gustavo Ipiña Day in Dallas.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Ballet Folklorico performs.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Elsa Olvera receives her certificate from Taly Haffar.



Photo by Kate Mackley
Yichuan Lu gets his certificate from Erin Hendricks.

4 responses to this article

probably me said at 9:37 a.m. on May 7, 2008, 9:37 a.m.

I know that when Liz does a story, the pictures will be as good and express as much as the written content.

Mack Attack said at 12:55 p.m. on May 7, 2008, 12:55 p.m.

Probably me - Thank you, I always appreciate your support of my work. I often submit my own photos with my articles. However, the pictures featured in this article are the work of staff photographer -extraordinaire - Kate Mackley. Her keen eye and talent with a camera would make the Dallas phone book sound interesting.

Mack Attack said at 13:13 p.m. on May 7, 2008, 13:13 p.m.

Please forgive the Typo, or Lois Lane episode, I actually do know how to spell Dallas.

bfelps said at 14:42 p.m. on May 7, 2008, 14:42 p.m.

huh? what typo?

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