



Antonio Trigo
Miami Union Academy
North Miami, FL

During the spring of 2009, as valedictorian of his eighth grade class, Antonio Trigo gave a moving speech and even played a solo piece on the piano for his school's graduation ceremony. However, a few years ago, Antonio was going nowhere in school. A Step Up For Students Scholarship provided him with the opportunity to attend a school that could meet his learning needs and he has excelled.

Life has not always been easy for Antonio and his family. When he was five years old, his grandmother, Patricia Allen, gained legal custody of Antonio and his siblings when his biological mother was no longer able to care for them. Patricia, who is now raising five of her grandchildren, works hard to make sure that they have everything that they need, including the proper education. That is why she was concerned when Antonio began to struggle in his public school classes.

Antonio's grades had dropped to C's and D's and he was having a hard time concentrating during class. He also began to get into physical fights with other students during school. Patricia was worried that his motivation would continue to dwindle along with his grades. She feared for his well-being and, ultimately, his future. She knew from her experience with Antonio's mother about the downfalls that were ahead if Antonio did not get back on the right path. She had to do something to save him.

As a struggling parent on a fixed income, Patricia felt that her options were very limited -- until she learned about the Step Up For Students Scholarship. Patricia applied and received a scholarship for Antonio, as well as for two of his younger brothers. She chose to send them to Mt.Olivet Seventh-Day Adventist School in Fort Lauderdale because she felt that it offered the right academic environment that her children desperately needed.

Antonio began to attend Mt. Olivet in seventh grade. The school was a perfect fit for him. The teachers at Mt.Olivet saw the potential Antonio had and worked with him to overcome his struggles. Raquel Ferguson, an associate of the school, also took a special interest in Antonio and his siblings. Referred to as "Ms. Raquel" by the children, she helped Antonio with schoolwork, helped to pay for his field trips, and even provided the family with donations including clothing and school supplies.

With the help from the Mt. Olivet staff and Ms. Raquel, Antonio regained his enthusiasm for learning and his grades soared. By the time he reached eighth grade, he was an honor roll student and had learned how to play the piano. He was even scoring two grade levels ahead on the standardized test administered at the school – the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In the spring of 2009, Antonio graduated as valedictorian of his eighth grade class!

Now in the ninth grade, Antonio is attending Miami Union Academy on the scholarship program and he is continuing to shine. Although he is a few years away from high school graduation, he has already begun to think about his future. He plans to attend college and pursue a degree in pathology.

Antonio's brothers have also excelled since receiving their Step Up For Students Scholarships. For example, Antonio's younger brother Mauricio Trigo has made leaps and bounds in his education. When Mauricio was preparing to enter kindergarten several years ago, he was testing at the top level for his age group and the test administrator commented that he would be the next president of the United States. However, upon entering kindergarten, he had five teachers throughout the school year and his academic performance began to decline due to the confusion and constant changes. He failed and had to repeat kindergarten. He continued to struggle in school until he received the Step Up For Students Scholarship to attend Mt.Olivet. He was able to get back on track and is now excelling in the sixth grade.

Antonio's youngest brother Terriano Trigo has also benefitted from the scholarship program. A Step Up For Students recipient since kindergarten, Terriano is now in the first grade and he is doing exceptionally well in school, including earning a spot on the honor roll. Antonio's other brother, Romelo, also attends Mt.Olivet on the McKay Scholarship for students with disabilities.

"I cannot thank Step Up For Students and its donors enough," says Patricia Allen, Antonio's grandmother and legal guardian. "Without these scholarships, there is no telling what would have happened to my boys. The scholarship program gave my children the second chances they needed for success in school and in life."

About Mt. Olivet Seventh-Day Adventist School

Located in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Mt. Olivet Seventh-Day Adventist School serves students in Kindergarten through eighth grade. Currently, 63 students are enrolled at the school, including 15 Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills twice a year – in the fall and again in the spring – to assess student progress and abilities. The standard tuition at the school is \$3,350 for all grade levels.

About Miami Union Academy

Located in North Miami, Fla., Miami Union Academy serves children from early childhood education through 12th grade. The school currently has 312 students, 162 of whom are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school's annual tuition rates range from \$4,710 for kindergarten up to \$6,993 for 12th grade. Miami Union administers the following standardized achievement tests: IOWA Test of Basic Skills, ACT, PSAT, Plan and Explorer.