



Hefziba Alonso
Tampa Bay Christian Academy
TAMPA, FL

Hefziba Alonso left public school after fifth grade because her mother was worried about discipline in the local middle school. Seven years later, she has graduated as class valedictorian at Tampa Bay Christian Academy. Along the way, she has dazzled her parents, her classmates and the faculty.

“Hefziba is just a great, great student who works very hard at the goals she sets for her self,” says Ana Lopez, Tampa Bay’s admissions officer. “She is wonderful academically and socially. Truly, everybody loves Hefziba.” Her personal accomplishments could also fill a yearbook. Hefziba was junior class president, senior class president, National Honor Science president, member of the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta honors math society. She ended up as valedictorian with a 4.42 grade point average and 21 college credits through dual enrollment at Hillsborough Community College.

“Hefziba really does give it her best effort, but she doesn’t stress out,” says Alejandra Alonso, her mother. “What I like is that the teachers there are so motivating and make learning fun.”

Alejandra and her husband are missionaries, which is rewarding work that also leaves the family without the resources to afford the school that ended up serving their daughter so well. She turned to Step Up For Students, then known in Tampa as Florida P.R.I.D.E., and the scholarship has made it possible for all seven years.

Hefziba thinks the school’s family atmosphere and caring teachers were ingredients to her success. “The teachers all knew me since I was little,” she says. “I think I always had the mindset of doing your best. If you want to see something happen, you just have to step up and get it done.”

Hefziba’s mother is from Mexico and her father from Cuba, and the entire family has always traveled on missions to places like Central America, the Philippines, Canada and across the United States. Hefziba speaks fluent Spanish herself, and is fascinated by other nations and cultures. After missionary work this summer in Mexico, she plans to finish her associate degree in one year at HCC and then pursue a degree in international relations at the University of Tennessee. She sees herself one day serving as an ambassador.

About Tampa Bay Christian Academy

Tampa Bay Christian Academy, at 300 Sligh Ave. in Tampa, was opened in 1957. It serves students from kindergarten to 12th grade and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Christian Schools International. The school offers an expansive curriculum, including a challenging reading program in early grades and dual college enrollment at Hillsborough Community College and the University of South Florida in high school. This past year, it enrolled 323 students, 40 of whom received a Step Up scholarship. The tuition ranges from \$5,177 to \$6,248, and students each year take the Stanford Achievement Test to gauge their progress.