

# 'Jeopardy' Host Lend Hand to Beca Cause

By William F. Willoughby  
The News Reporter

They call it "The Possible Dream," an obvious play on words derived from reference to the echoing song from "Man of la Mancha," a song titled "The Impossible Dream." But for many of the young people in the United States who speak the same language

that Don Quixote spoke, it might still be the impossible dream, even if they make it to college. An inordinate number won't make it through.

This is what a San Marcos-based organization called Beca, backed by many of the city's and the region's top educators, bankers, industrialists and other professionals, is trying to change.

They're trying to take the negative forces out of the word impossible and turn it into the possible dream for young aspiring Hispanics.

Last year, Beca awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships to youths of Hispanic origin who make it to college, but, due to any of a number of reasons, often find very little encouragement to stay when things start to go roughly.

It's not that Anglo students, who generally have it a lot better, or blacks, who as a rule don't have it as easy as do whites in college, are shining examples of sticktoitiveness themselves. With Hispanics, it is a lot different kind of situation.

Anglos, for instance, enter college at a rate of 38 out of 100 high school graduates. Only 23 percent stay on to complete college.

Blacks enter college at the rate of 29 percent of the high school graduates; 12 percent stay on to finish.

With Hispanics, the number entering college who complete high school is 22 percent; the percentage who are graduated is slightly under a third that, or 7 percent.

This last rung of statistics is what concerns Beca. Students have opportunities, many times, that their parents wouldn't have dreamed of, but language, money, cultural and other difficulties plague them in carrying all the way through.

It is easy, no matter how proud the parents might be of a son or daughter being able to enter college, for them to resort to a "Come on home" invitation if the going gets out of hand or if finances are difficult at home.

Often it is because the Hispanic student and his parents don't really know where to turn for solid counseling and for other assistance that could spell the difference between dropping out or going on for the degree.

The problem is a big one for California. Big because the Hispanic school population in California is expected to hit the 50-percent mark by the Year 2000.

As the Beca Foundation says, "This will have considerable impact on the social, political and economic composition of our communities."

In a Beca brochure explaining its purpose and ways



Alex Trebek

of accomplishing it, it says "Beca research discloses that many Hispanic students who have maintained B and above grade-point averages in high school fail to enter the university system because of the lack of direction and resources."

Beca, the article said, "is addressing this need by assuring educational opportunities for qualified students. The foundation offers general education scholarships and medical scholarships.

Scholarships range from \$500 to \$2,000 per student per year for an awardee attending a community college or a four-year accredited college or university.

As another important means of support, a "role model" mentor is matched with each student to provide guidance, leadership, support and continuous counseling throughout the student's academic



Teresa Ornelas

career.

The foundation encourages supporting corporations, foundations and individuals to sponsor a student for the duration of his or her educational experience, with a minimum donation of \$500, all of which goes to the student's aid.

Not long ago, the Beca Foundation received an \$80,000 grant from the James Irvine Foundation to further Beca's cause. Some of the money is on a matching basis.

The grant is a one-time award to assist in a collaboration effort between Beca Foundation, Palomar College, California State University, San Marcos, and the San Diego County Office of Education.

It is for a new educational project called Future Teacher Corps (FTC), a teacher recruitment and support program for minority students. The Beca Foundation must raise \$50,000 to be used for Hispanic student scholarships in the FTC program, with the matching \$50,000 raised before any scholarships specifically from the grant can be awarded.

A successful program in this effort would greatly enhance the scholarship activities already in place by Beca Foundation.

Teresa G. Ornelas, executive director of Beca, announced that the organization's Seventh Annual Awards Dinner is set for Saturday, June 15, at the Rancho Bernardo Inn.

Television game host Alex Trebek will be the keynote speaker. The "Jeopardy" host long has participated in international educational programs.

Cocktails begin at 4:30 p.m., with Trio Intimo, a mariachi group, playing, and with dinner at 6 o'clock.

Sponsors of the dinner are Kaiser Permanente Hospital, Markstein Distributing Company of San Marcos and Pacific Bell.

Marianne Gutierrez, who is chairing the dinner activities, said details concerning the dinner, or about the foundation itself, may be obtained by calling 471-5465. David G. Ronquillo is president of the foundation.