STRAIGHT FROM
THE HEART

C arolina Quirarte has seen first-hand the difference that a healthcare provider's demeanor can have on a patient.

Carolina watched her grandmother battle breast cancer for 14 years. Her grandmother's emotional state was a like a roller-coaster ride, rising and falling as a direct result of the disposition of the doctor or nurse.

It was seeing the help and kindness her grandmother received from a hospice nurse that inspired Carolina to pursue a career in nursing.

It wouldn't be an easy road. Carolina's father died when she was 5 and her mother struggled to support Carolina and her siblings.

But Carolina is well on her way to achieving her dream of helping others just as that nurse helped her grandmother.

A third-year student at Cal State San Marcos, Carolina received a welcome reward for her hard work, earning the CSU Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement by being named the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation Scholar. The Trustees' Award is given annually to one student from each of the 23 CSU campuses to those who demonstrate superior academic performance, personal accomplishments, community service and financial need.

"Carolina has worked very hard and has overcome financial hardships and family obligations to achieve her remarkable 4.0 academic record," said Perla Rivas, a counselor for CSUSM's TRiO Student Support Services, which assists first-generation, low-income and/or students with disabilities toward the successful completion of their college degree.

Carolina remembers the frequent trips to the hospital for her grandmother's cancer treatment. And the memory of one nurse's compassion as her grandmother was in hospice still resonates.

"I saw first-hand the effect that having a positive attitude toward a patient who's at the end stages of their life can have," Carolina said. "Just being that comfort, that hug, holding their hand. I know it's going to be hard, but I think I can do it and I'll be able to make that same difference that nurse made in our lives to other people."

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