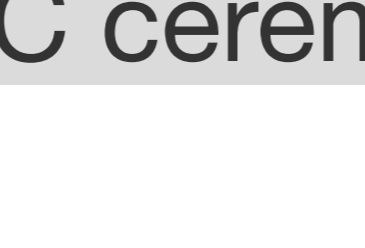


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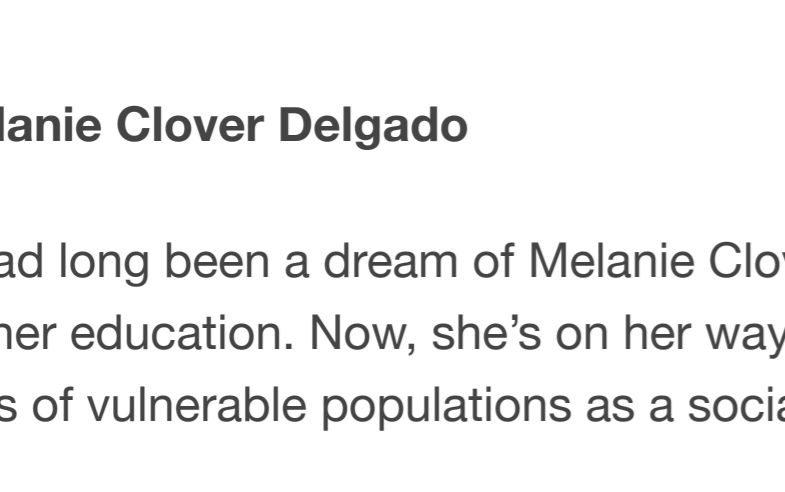
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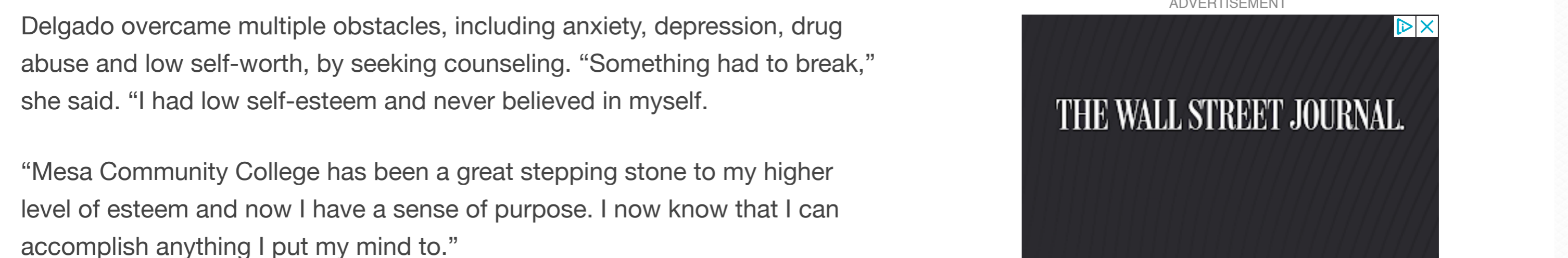
Mesa residents in MCC ceremonies followed varied paths

Tribune News Staff May 13, 2024

Mesa Community College profiled some of more than 500 Mesa residents who received associate's degrees or certificates in commencement ceremonies yesterday, May 11.

Here's a look at them.

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Melanie Clover Delgado

Melanie Clover Delgado, 63, has found her path to higher education. Now, she's on her way to making a real difference in the lives of vulnerable populations as a social worker/counselor.

Delgado overcame multiple obstacles, including anxiety, depression, drug abuse and low self-worth, by seeking counseling. "Something had to break," she said. "I had low self-esteem and never believed in myself."

"Mesa Community College has been a great stepping stone to my higher level of esteem and now I have a sense of purpose. I now know that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to."

Her goal became clearer after helping a girl who had been struggling with drug addiction since age 13.

"After she told me her parents had disowned her, I provided her with resources and told her she could call me anytime, day or night," Delgado said.

During her time at MCC, Delgado struggled to overcome her own obstacles. With federal funding and her husband's help earning wages from his work at the ballparks in the Valley, she was able to attend college. Yet Delgado's partner of 15 years, Raymond Delgado, contracted COVID first in 2020 and again in July 2021, which caused a major heart attack. Several weeks later he was diagnosed with cancer.

She switched her classes to online and stayed home to take care of him while he was actively enduring cancer treatment for the next two years.

The Delgados wanted to get married prior to his illness but felt his care came first. They were married on March 6, 2023 in the MCC Rose Garden. Raymond passed away on April 23, 2023.

Delgado is on track with a Pathway MAPP Program at Arizona State University to finish her bachelor's degree.

She said she could not have done it without assistance from several MCC resources including: TRIO Services, Student Support Services and Positive Paths Women Building New Bridges, an organization that provides women a life-bridge to economic stability, personal growth and professional achievement. Additionally, Delgado is a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a prestigious honor society.



Asmera McNeace

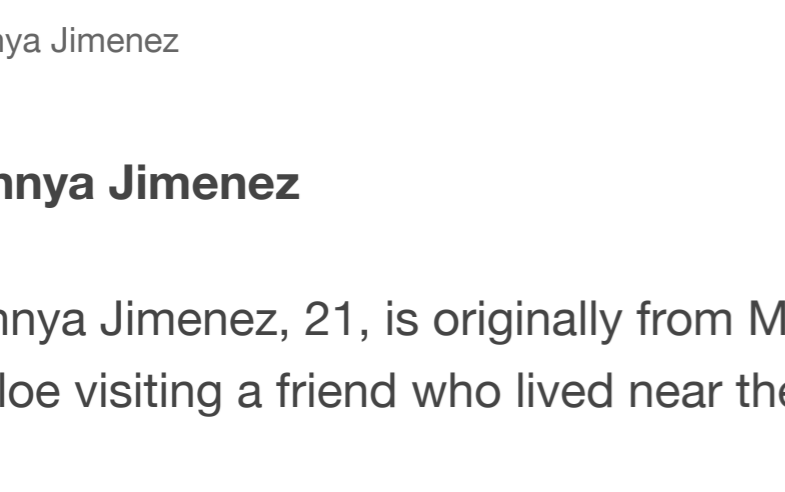
Asmera McNeace, 18, is graduating from both high school and college. He was home-schooled and chose to attend MCC because it was close to his home.

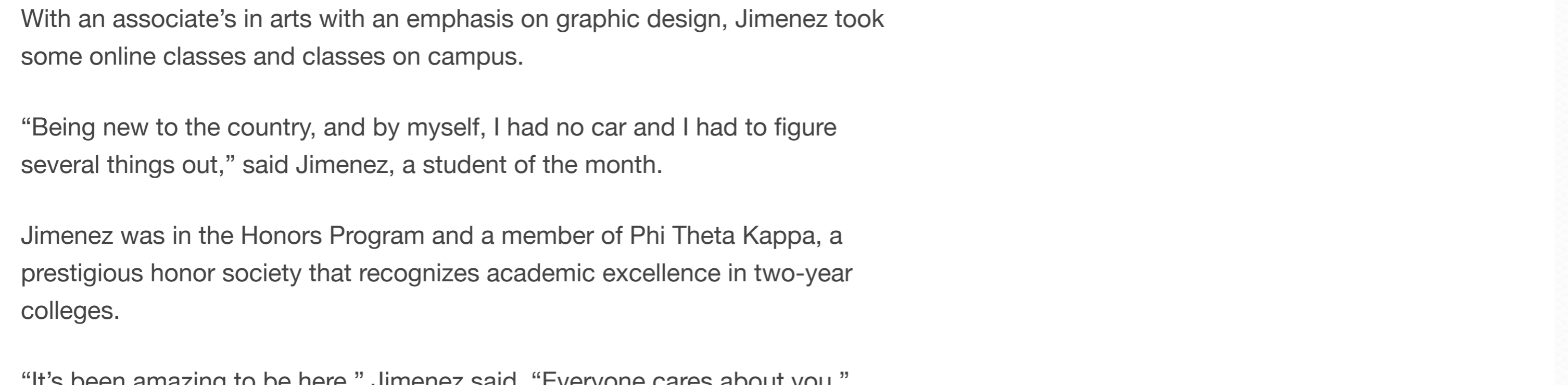
"There weren't too many obstacles that I had to overcome during my education, but it did teach me many good lessons," McNeace said. "I learned time management, commitment and perseverance."

"Time is one of those things that you will never get back, so being able to use time as efficiently as possible can be a great skill," he added. "Regarding commitment, things in life will most likely become challenging at some point, so staying true to yourself and your goal is crucial. Without commitment, you can never truly become successful."

Stating his parents "gave me everything I needed," he added plans to enlist in the Navy and earn his bachelor's degree.

"I know that life is going to be challenging," McNeace said. "Challenges don't make us who we are, it's how we react to them that makes us who we are. We should all look forward to challenges, because challenges make us stronger, better individuals."

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Kashmir Baillie

With associate degrees in applied science in forensic science and arts, emphasis in criminal justice, Kashmir Baillie's career goal is to become a lawyer.

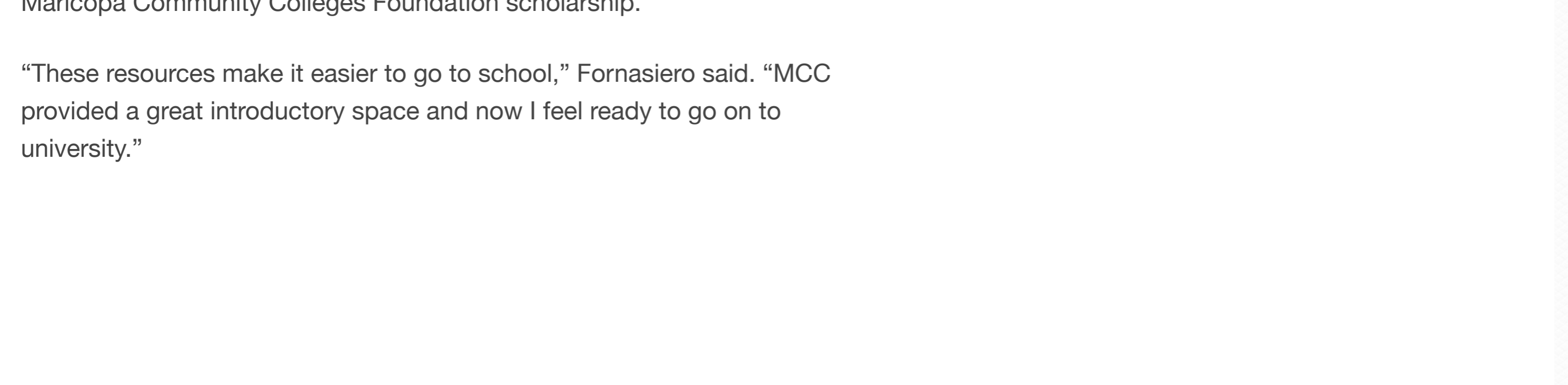
"I will never forget how MCC helped me reach the first step in my higher education," she praised its "quality education at a great price."

Additionally, she will receive certificates of completion in crime scene investigation and another in fingerprint identification and photography.

"Working to pay for school and my other expenses while also having six classes each semester often caused me to be stressed," she said. "Despite those low points, I can appreciate the things that the situation has taught me. I can now handle more projects and have developed a great sense of time management."

"In the future, I will reflect on those times and know that the tough times always get better."

She plans to transfer to Grand Canyon University to obtain a bachelor's degree in government studies with an emphasis in law, and then apply to Arizona State University's law school. She has received a GCU scholarship.



Hannya Jimenez

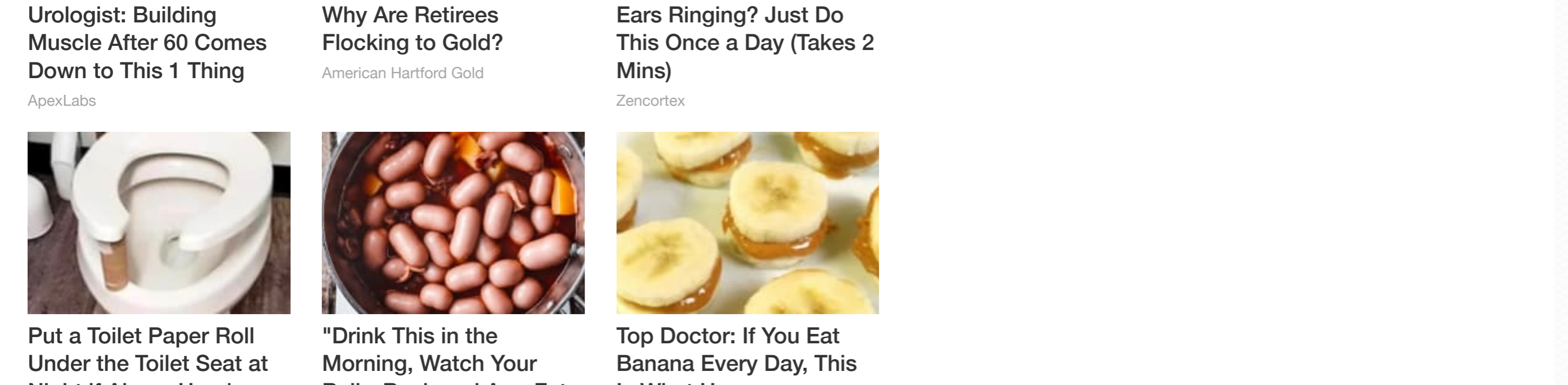
Hannya Jimenez, 21, is originally from Mexico and found out about MCC while visiting a friend who lived near the college.

With an associate's in arts with an emphasis on graphic design, Jimenez took some online classes and classes on campus.

"Being new to the country, and by myself, I had no car and I had to figure several things out," said Jimenez, a student of the month.

Jimenez was in the Honors Program and a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a prestigious honor society that recognizes academic excellence in two-year colleges.

"It's been amazing to be here," Jimenez said. "Everyone cares about you."



Charlotte Fornasiero

Charlotte Fornasiero, 22, was not quite ready to jump directly into college after high school graduation. After a tumultuous childhood, she took a few years off to decide what she wanted to do next.

She said the college is a great opportunity for nontraditional students.

Fornasiero, who majored in liberal arts and studies/general studies, plans to transfer to Arizona State University to earn a bachelor's degree in a biology-related field. Her career goal is to work in interpretive naturalism, preferably for organizations such as the National Forest Service.

"The nerd in me loves to learn about nature," Fornasiero explained. "So, to work as an interpretive naturalist is a dream job, combining teaching, nature, out in nature. That would be a lot of fun."

She currently works part-time in the college's Center for Community and Civic Engagement as a community engagement specialist.

"My job helps foster growth on our campus," she said. "Working on campus got me involved in volunteering and campus events."

Fornasiero, recently named to the All-Arizona Academic Team, has also received a scholarship from Positive Paths, which awards funds to women with significant hardships in life. She also received a Pell Grant and a Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation scholarship.

"These resources make it easier to go to school," Fornasiero said. "MCC provided a great introductory space and now I feel ready to go on to university."

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