

## Program helps guide Henderson student to college

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HENDERSONVILLE — A Hendersonville High School sophomore is one of a handful of schoolchildren in the Southeast to benefit from a program designed to support gifted middle and high school students and get them and their parents thinking about college.

Felicia Arriaga, 15, has been a part of the Next Generation Venture Fund for about three years. The program provides for personal counseling and online instruction during the school year and academic camps during the summer.

Arriaga spent the past two summers studying algebra and geology at the program's camp at Appalachian State University in Boone, which she plans on attending again this summer.

Recently, the program provided Arriaga with a laptop computer — “So that was pretty cool of them, too,” she said.

NGVF has been around for about three years, said Scott Greenwood, chief operating officer of the Duke University Talent Identification Program. TIP, along with the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University, formed NGVF and is responsible for finding students to participate and for finding sponsors to fund the program.

Once accepted into the program, NGVF scholars are readied and prepared to be accepted to the most competitive colleges in the country. They take advanced and distance-learning courses, receive year-round counseling from program counselors and are guided to leadership programs and other opportunities.

NGVF scholars are identified to participate in the fourth, fifth and seventh grades and score in the 97th or above percentile on standardized tests. These children are often minorities whose parents are supportive of higher education but need help themselves navigating the complexities of entry to top colleges and universities, Greenwood said.

The program so far has had about 100 participants and the first group of students will enter college in the next couple years, Greenwood said. “It's making a difference,” he said.

Arriaga, who lives with her mother, three sisters and younger brother, said the program is fun and challenges her to see her potential. She hopes to attend Duke and dreams of being an attorney. Her GPA is 4.2 and her favorite class is English. She participates in the Keywanettes and Health Occupation Students of America service clubs.



Felicia Arriaga, 15, serves Jim Few while she works at the concession stand during a recent Hendersonville High School basketball game. Arriaga participates in the Next Generation Venture Fund, a program that helps prepare students for college.