

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**PICKENS-ABRAHAM FOUNDATION GIVES \$200,000 IN EDUCATION AWARDS;  
FIVE STUDENTS IN ROBERTS AND HEMPHILL COUNTY EARN SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Pickens-Abraham Foundation is distributing \$100,000 to the Opportunity Plan Inc, an organization assisting Panhandle youth, and another \$50,000 each to the Canadian and Miami school districts. The awards push the Foundation's total support to Roberts and Hemphill county youth programs beyond \$1.6 million since its inception in 2008.

The Foundation, formed by longtime Roberts County landowner and philanthropist T. Boone Pickens and Canadian, Texas, couple Salem and Ruth Ann Abraham, partners with Opportunity Plan to provide annual financial assistance to high school graduates of Miami High School and Canadian High School.

"Boone, Ruth Ann and I share a bond with these communities and feel it is important to help these kids achieve their dreams," Salem Abraham said. "There are great challenges in education, and we are hopeful that this money will address those needs and make a difference."

The Canadian and Miami School Districts will receive \$50,000 each for 2018 operating support.

The five graduates receiving the 2018 Pickens-Abraham scholarships (with high school attended and university choice) are:

Ramon Baylon, son of Ramon Baylon and Dora Ontiveros, Miami, attending Texas A&M University, majoring in mechanical engineering;

Estefany Lopez, daughter of Carlos Lopez, Canadian, attending Cottey College, majoring in fine arts;

Kevin Moreno, son of Adrian Morena and Beatriz Gonzalez, Canadian, attending Amarillo College, majoring in automotive technology;

Luis Sanchez, son of Roxanna Sanchez, Canadian, attending Texas Tech University, majoring in biology;

Mercedes Valenzuela, daughter of Jaime and Ina Valenzuela, Canadian, attending Angelo State University, majoring in biology/pre-med.

Each of these students will receive \$3,000 per semester through their undergraduate career, up to eight semesters.

Sixty-one students have received funding from the Foundation totalling \$1 million, and 70 percent have completed or are currently pursuing higher education, according to Canyon-based OPI's executive director M. Keith Brown

“Many of these students could not complete post-secondary education without these scholarships, and for some of them, it is the only financial aid for which they qualify,” Brown says.

Pickens founded Mesa Petroleum, once one of the nation's premiere independent oil companies. Pickens later embarked on an even more successful career by forming an energy-focused investment firm, BP Capital, often one of America's most successful hedge funds primarily focused on oil and gas commodities and energy-dependent equities.

In 1971, Pickens purchased the first parcel of land in Roberts County that would become Mesa Vista Ranch, which he calls home. He now owns 65,000 acres, concentrating on restoration and habitat recovery initiatives. That work, along with efforts to market area water rights, have led to a tremendous increase in local land values.

Salem Abraham is owner and president of a successful investment hedge fund housed in the Moody Building in Canadian. His company, Abraham Trading Co., trades global commodity futures using a strategy that relies in large part on the behavioral sciences and the mentality of crowds. Salem has also been involved in land, oil, gas, water rights and real estate deals throughout the Panhandle. He and Ruth Ann both grew up in Canadian and now live there with their children.

*Local students are encouraged to complete the General Scholarship Application on OPI's website, [www.OpportunityPlan.com](http://www.OpportunityPlan.com), to be considered.*

*OPI assists donors who wish to support students' higher education goals and operates numerous scholarship and loan funds for students throughout the Texas Panhandle and South Plains regions. For more information about OPI and applying for the Pickens-Abraham Foundation Scholarship, call 806-655-2528.*