



FINANCIAL AID

Thinking Outside the Boxing

A new scholarship recognizes the commitment of a boxing coach to his athletes and to his upstate community.

By Kathleen McGarvey

Growing up, Jonathan Vazquez '11 looked up to his cousin, two-time world champion welterweight fighter Miguel Cotto. "He was always an inspiration," says Vazquez.

Cotto's example led Vazquez to try his own hand at boxing—and the sport, in turn, has led him to Rochester.

Vazquez, a native of Newark, N.Y., is the first recipient of the Geneva Boxing Team Scholarship, a new scholarship that honors Tim Hill, the coach of a boxing team in the Finger Lakes town of Geneva.

Hill, a former professional boxer, and his family have devoted themselves to helping young people, especially those at risk.

"I've never met anybody as caring as he is about his community," Vazquez says of his coach. Hill's boxing career ended when he broke his back in a construction accident. He returned to college to earn a social work

degree, becoming a high school counselor and coach for the boxing team.

Last year, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* featured the Hills on one of its episodes, building a small boxing gym behind their renovated house. Jon Burdick, the dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, suggested that the University could help, too, with the creation of the scholarship.

The scholarship provides up to \$400,000 in financial aid over a 10-year period to Geneva Boxing Team members who demonstrate a serious commitment to the pursuit of higher education at the University. Last year Vazquez earned his associate's degree at Finger Lakes Community College,

▲ **RING MAN:** Jonathan Vazquez '11 is the first recipient of a University scholarship that recognizes an upstate boxing coach, a commitment that was sparked in part by ABC-TV's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

and became a student at the University in the fall. Through the scholarship, he'll receive \$40,000 toward his college expenses each year.

"No one in my family has graduated with a bachelor's degree," says Vazquez. He's earning an undergraduate degree in economics and hopes later to pursue a graduate degree at the Simon School.

Vazquez has relished his transition to Rochester. "I love the atmosphere and the environment," he says.

And while he's busy with courses in areas such as economics and Chinese, he hasn't left boxing behind. He continues to practice occasionally with the Geneva team, and he's been coaching some University friends as well.

"I'm interested in starting a club," he says.

The lessons he learned in the boxing ring about achievement are also guiding him in his work as a student.

Possibilities open, he says, when you're "determined to do something. You can't accomplish goals if you don't believe you can." ®