



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:** Damon L. Humes, (215) 431-1790

**Email:** [houseofblahnik@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofblahnik@yahoo.com)

National Organization Announces Continued Support for Academic Excellence  
*5<sup>th</sup> Annual House of Blahnik Scholarship*

Over the last five years, the House of Blahnik (HOB) has provided financial support to members of the house/ball community who have sought academic advancement. HOB forges ahead with the announcement of its 6<sup>th</sup> year run of this coveted and dynamic program. The house/ball community is an underground subculture within the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Membership is comprised of mostly Black and Latino(a) youth/young adults, of varying ages, in cities around the United States, Canada, and Japan. This subculture has gained notoriety and mainstream media attention from megastars such as Madonna in her video (affectionately named) *Vogue*, the popular dance group *VOGUE Evolution*, the documentaries *Paris Is Burning* and *How Do I Look* as well as an episode of the LOGO network-bred television series *Noah's Ark*. This sub-culture, like many indigenous to the Black and Latino community, was born out of a need to immortalize its own stars and leaders. "The instruments of oppression that continue to loom over the LGBT community of color will continue to have an adversary in the House of Blahnik. We are committed to continuing to create opportunities and empower house/ball community members to define and reach for their own level of personal success." remarked Kevin Bynes, President of the HOBs Board of Directors.

This year's recipient of the *House of Blahnik Scholarship* is Shannon 007. Shannon is the first ever transgender person to receive this scholarship; thus making her a role model among other transgender women of color. She has been walking balls for over 5 years strong, consistently capturing trophies in the categories of Face, Body, Sex Siren, and Realness. Shannon currently is a student at Georgia Perimeter College where she majors in Business Administration. "Much like the House of Blahnik, I myself would use this as a platform to show that through dedication and hard work your goals can be realized despite the prejudice that existed towards individuals like me in the past." remarked Shannon.

Past recipients of this prestigious accolade include Dray Ebony (2010), Grandfather of the Icon House of Ebony and staff person with FACES-NY; YB Chanel (2009) member of the Icon House of Chanel and volunteer with many community-based organizations in the North Carolina area that focused on HIV prevention; Boi Boi St. Clair (2008), member of the Legendary House of St. Clair and active community member; and our inaugural recipient Ajay Balenciaga (2008), active member of the house/ball community and advocate and activist in LGBT affairs. "All of these recipients have embodied the essence of the HOBs fundamental model for success by pursuing and furthering their education and serving as agents of community and social change. Each scholar recognizes the need to give back and support the community from which they come," comments Damon L. Humes, also known as Jay Blahnik- Overall Father and Founder of the House of Blahnik.

Established in 2006, the HOB Scholarship Fund has been a pivotal force in breaking down barriers that prevent the attainment of post secondary education. "The development of this scholarship and its continuity has been a process, solely supported by contributions [internally] from House of Blahnik leadership. We would like to see this paradigm shift going forward, and empower members of the house/ball community and the general public to invest in this valuable program with a proven track record of success," Humes notes. "When we demonstrate that something we are connected to has value, and we invest in it, we subconsciously give others permission to do the same," remarks Stephaun Wallace, Western NY Father and Member of the House of Blahnik's Board of Directors. The deadline to submit an application for this scholarship program is Friday, December 16th, 2011 at 5PM EST; with an anticipated decision date of January 13th, 2011.

*The House of Blahnik* is a competitive family structure within the house/ball scene. Founded in August of 1999 and publically debuting on May 1, 2000. The HOB is most known for its ground-breaking and imaginative Broadway-styled productions; as well as its social responsibility to LGBT people of color in communities across the US and Canada. The HOB is under the fiscal management and oversight of the MOCHA Center, Inc. a registered non-profit organization in the State of New York and is governed by a Board of Directors. With chapters in New York

State (NY), Philadelphia (PA), Atlanta (GA), Detroit (MI), Miami (FL), Chicago (IL), Cleveland (OH), North and South Carolina, Oakland (CA) and various cities in New Jersey, Blahnik seeks to invest in the future of ball participants who make valuable contributions to the ballroom and LGBT communities.

To inquire about the scholarship program or to make a tax-deductible contribution to the House of Blahnik Scholarship Program, please visit our website: [www.houseofblahnik.org](http://www.houseofblahnik.org) or contact Damon Humes at [houseofblahnik@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofblahnik@yahoo.com) or (215) 431-1790.