

Student's success story shared at D.C. summit

by **Mary Beth Faller** - Oct. 9, 2010 12:00 AM
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Albert Ojeda's transition from community college to Arizona State University is a success story, but it was his journey from a boy at risk to community-college student that led him to Washington, D.C.

Ojeda, a graduate of Estrella Mountain Community College, spoke Tuesday at the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges.

"It was a surreal experience, very nerve-wracking," said Ojeda, 22, a Phoenix resident and a senior at ASU.

Ojeda introduced Jill Biden, a community-college teacher and wife of Vice President Joe Biden. She presided over the summit.

He met Biden last year when she visited the Valley, and, impressed with the young man, invited him to introduce her at this week's summit. There, Ojeda shared his story.

"I spoke about how my father passed away when I was 5 years old and how I lost my mother to her addictions and to prison when I was 6 years old," he said. "And I told them how my aunt and uncle adopted me and filled me with the values of respect and service."

Ojeda graduated from Peoria High School in 2006.

"I pretty much wasted a year and half of my

time and realized my life was heading in the direction I always told myself it wouldn't go," he said.

He enrolled at Estrella Mountain, where he flourished. "When I finally showed up I began to realize the importance of an education," he said.

He told the White House summit how his professors and advisers developed relationships with him and cared about his academic success.

He graduated with an associate of arts degree with highest distinction and is studying political science at ASU. He hopes to attend law school, and eventually work for the federal government.

After the summit, Ojeda, his aunt and uncle were invited to a reception at Blair House, residence of Vice President Joe Biden, who told him: "Don't forget me when you're president."

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