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UCF's Rebecca Galarza wins performance award at IAAPA

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Rebecca Galarza
(photo by Scott Lerner)

Rebecca Galarza, a junior musical-theater major at the University of Central Florida, has been given the Best Female Performer in the World award at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Brass Ring Awards.

The IAAPA Brass Ring conference and award ceremony, which took place at the Orange County Convention Center, had representatives from the majority of theme parks all over the world. Galarza's family and managers were there to cheer her on.

Galarza auditioned for RWS and Associates, the largest full-service entertainment firm in the U.S., when the company came to UCF and held auditions at the Theatre Department this year. She

subsequently landed an internship and a professional performing job in New Hampshire at Santa's Village theme park.

"Rebecca is one of the best students in this program," said Earl Weaver, her adviser, professor and musical-theater coordinator.

"She's a triple threat, a leader in the department and a good mentor to other students. When I met the president of RWS and Associates, he couldn't stop talking about how wonderful an employee she was, and this is the guy who does the hiring."

Galarza's reaction to the award: "I felt like I was at the Oscars of live entertainment! The event was so huge! When the nominees were announced, I was really proud to see my picture on the screen.

"One of the nominees was the most adorable little girl in a pink dress and pigtails, and after the crowd heaved a collective sigh of how cute she looked, I turned to my brother and said 'I didn't win' and we laughed it off. But then they started playing my winning video, and I was so shocked and excited! I could not stop smiling for the rest of the night, I was so thankful.



Rebecca Galarza, on the job at Santa's Workshop. (photo by Vincent Pellegrino)

"After the show I had so many wonderful people tell me that they appreciated someone getting the award who was so excited and vivacious. I sincerely responded, 'This means the world to me.' It was a privilege to be nominated, and I still can't believe that I won. RWS and Associates had never before had anyone nominated, and now together we have won!"

Galarza's personal goals include her desire to perform in a play that represents her Hispanic background. Right now, she plans to finish her degree program with the Theatre Department at UCF and also hopes that winning the IAAPA conference award will help her to get signed with an agent in Orlando.



Rebecca Galarza at Santa's Workshop in New Hampshire. (photo by Thomas Green)