

Where they are now ...

TOI scholarship winners make time for others

BEFORE READING FURTHER, you'd better put on your running shoes.

It may be the only way you can keep up with these TOI scholarship winners, who continue to achieve and grow through higher education seven years after graduating from high school.

What you are about to read is not fiction ...it's the story of six real people who are all TOI scholarship recipients from 2002.

Over achievers, you may say? Maybe.

But what great achievements to set our sights on.

The giver becomes the receiver

At 24, Lyndsi Baker has just returned from an experience she knows has altered the rest of her life.

After earning an Environmental Issues degree from Loyola University, Baker committed to spending two and one-half years in Honduras with Farm of the Child, a Catholic organization that operates an orphanage. As a social worker there, she came to know the 50 children, many who have been orphaned and abandoned, some who have been abused, who live in family-style homes.

"It was the perfect time for me to do this. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do," she said. "I started off as a biology major, thinking I wanted to be a doctor, but I didn't like the minute things of life. I like big, unsolvable problems. With Loyola being a Jesuit university, I started looking for service programs because the Jesuits are big on service."

Honduras is the poorest and least developed nation in Central America. While the Farm of the Child has electricity and running water, many of its neighbors do not, and Baker said it was not uncommon to be without water for a week at a time.

"Everything I needed when I grew up, I always had," she said of her childhood in Sherman, just north of Springfield (Fancy Creek Township). "Some of these kids have been abused, some don't even know who their family is. It makes me see how blessed I am to have family and loved ones."

Baker came home just before Christmas, and says it will take some time for her to assimilate the culture change. She is staying with her sister's family in Mon-

mouth before heading to New York City.

"I would really love to work with the Latino community, maybe in community organizing or with a non-profit organization," she said. "I was always kind of a tree hugger, and I guess it became more pronounced when I went to college. It opens you up to a new breed of people."

She spoke Spanish before she went to Honduras, but all volunteers spend two months in Guatemala in training before they report to Farm of the Child.

"Most of the 15 volunteers were from the United States, with one from Mexico and one from Canada. You get so entangled in these kids' personal lives and working in a different culture, that it takes a while to flourish and feel comfortable; that's why such a time commitment is required."

"... they gave me more than I could have ever given them. It's something that will affect me forever."

— Lyndsi Baker

Volunteers serve as support staff at the Farm, that includes elementary and middle schools, a medical clinic and church, she said. In each home, 8-10 children live with a Catholic Honduran couple who are hired to raise the children. Although conditions are poor, Baker said the countryside is beautiful. Being on the Caribbean coast with nearby beach, volunteers were able to take Farm residents to swim one day, and hike the surrounding mountains the next day.

"It was a great natural experience, because there is a lot of beauty there. Leaving was tough, because you go, thinking you're going to help them, and they gave me more than I could have ever given them. It's something that will affect me forever."

To make the trip, she fundraised \$10,000 for her food and living costs.

"Most of my support came from family, friends, and churches, and the Archdiocese of Chicago paid my insurance. Even the fundraising was rewarding, although I had to write a lot of letters. It was interesting to see the different ways volunteers raised funds," she said. She came home once a year to visit, and her

parents, Gary and Judy Baker, traveled to Honduras to visit the Farm.

“I think at first they were probably wondering what I was thinking, but they were very supportive and helped with the fundraising. I’ve always been kind of a big dreamer,” she said.

Being back home, Baker said she notices now the things that were taken for granted—how many toys children have and how many pairs of shoes most people have; at the Farm, one pair of flip flops was all most residents had.

“Even though they had nothing, they fought to keep their community together, and it’s amazing to see how much everyone helped each other,” she said. One of the Farm’s neighbors wanted to get electricity, and before she left, she was able to see the lights go on for that family.

“It was very cool, because it was really important to them. Honduras isn’t in the news much, but it’s a place that needs support and help. I would love to go back someday. I don’t know if I’d want to live internationally my whole life, but I’d definitely like to be involved in some way.”

Baker said she looks forward to the challenge of finding satisfying work, learning how to live more simply, and solving those unanswerable questions.

To learn more about Farm of the Child, visit www.farmofthechild.org.

City life’s fun for computer programmer

Mark Cochran is working in his career choice—Computer Science—with Acquity Group in Chicago, after graduating from the University of Illinois in 2006. A tech consultant with a company with six offices in the United States, Cochran lives four blocks south of Wrigley Field in Lakeview.

“For the most part, this is what I saw myself doing. I’ve always been a pragmatic person, and enjoy programming a computer to do what you want it to do,” he said.

With a staff of about 285 tech consultants, business analysts and support people, Acquity provides digital strategies, builds e-commerce sites and leads web content management projects, he said.

While Acquity Group has offices in Kansas City, Dallas, Scottsdale, AZ, Irvine and Los Angeles, CA, Cochran said he primarily works from the Chicago office.

“The Computer Science program at U of I is fast paced, because it’s one of the top ranked CS programs, so it’s a combination of classes and self study ...”, he said.

After Cochran’s sophomore year at U of I, he interned for John Deere, helping develop a career

management tool for the company. The following summer, he lived in Atlanta and interned for GE Energy, where he managed an internal project that involved finding a vendor to build a new web site for the company.

“For the most part, this is what I saw myself doing.”

— Mark Cochran

“The vendor we chose is in India, so it involved working with different time zones,” Cochran said. “It was nice to live someplace different for the summer too.”

Cochran was honored when he graduated from U of I by being the 500,001st graduate of the university.

“I got a call from the admissions office a couple of weeks before graduation, which can be scary, but it was to tell me I was the 500,001st graduate, so they took pictures and I had a special seat at the campus-wide ceremony where the university president introduced me.”

Cochran was a member of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity and played trumpet in the concert band during his freshman year on campus. He also ushered for mass at Newman Center.

“Chicago is fun and there’s always something going on, but I’d probably like to come back to a smaller area someday,” said the Mt. Pulaski Township (Logan Co.) native. “It would be nice to get more involved in the community.”

“I’ve run a couple of half marathons. I’d like to do a marathon, and I’m teaching myself to play bass guitar,” he said.

Buying and selling companies is his trade

Paul Fricilone has felt the brutality of the dismal economy.

As an associate at Lane Berry & Co., a boutique Mergers and Acquisitions advisory firm in Boston, Fricilone’s business is buying and selling companies, primarily sell-side, representing a seller of their business.

“Our industry has been hit hard, with investment banks, Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns going bankrupt,” Fricilone said. “The other investment banks are under pressure and it is a tough time to do business. Since there’s little debt available in the market, it becomes difficult to finance transactions.”

Fricilone said it is similar to buying a house; when





FROM 2002 – PAUL FRICILONE (center) received a TOI scholarship. From left are his parents, Diane and Michael Fricilone; Paul; former Homer Township Clerk and TOI Director Ethel Rodriguez and Supervisor Andrew Fazio.

money is not being loaned, no one can buy companies either.

“Fortunately, Lane Berry has been able to stay busy. We act as an advisor to companies if they want to buy a company or sell their company, much like a realtor works with homebuyers or sellers,” he said. “We also can raise capital for a company whether we put the company in touch with someone who will lend them money or someone who wants to invest in them.”

“Our industry has been hit hard, with investment banks, Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns going bankrupt.”

— Paul Fricilone

Fricilone finished his Bachelor’s of Science in Finance at Northern Illinois University in 2006. The Homer Township (Will Co.) native then went to MIT Sloan School of Management and received his MBA in 2008.

“As of right now, my career goals are to excel at my job and work up the ladder at an investment

bank,” said Fricilone. “Since I recently started working, I haven’t had much time for other activities. I am involved in a reading program in which I go to a local grammar school and read with a second grader once a week. I enjoy reading with my second grader; it helps get your mind off work and provides you with perspective on other peoples’ life situations. In the future, I would like to get more involved in community organizations or charities.”

While at Sloan, Fricilone was involved in a number of organizations such as the Finance Club and the Sales Club.

One of Fricilone’s loves is traveling.

“During my two years at Sloan, I traveled to China for 10 days (Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong), a week in Costa Rica, 5 weeks in Brazil (3 weeks working for a company doing consulting and 2 weeks of travel culminating in Carnival in Rio), 2 weeks traveling through Tanzania and Rwanda, a week in the British Virgin Islands sailing, and then 40 days in Europe this past summer backpacking through Portugal, Spain, France, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

“When I was younger, my parents would take my sister, brother and me on yearly vacations, and we traveled to a different part of the U.S. every year. Over 10 or so years of trips, we went all over the country and have seen many of the important sites. Eventually, we started going outside the U.S. to Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean. I hope to continue to travel the world in the future.”

‘On call’ is life of a doctor

Andrea (Hyser) Giamalva attended the University of Illinois 2002-2005, graduating one semester early with a bachelor’s in Spanish and a minor in Chemistry. Giamalva was involved in campus activities, volunteering, a study-abroad program in Spain and held leadership roles in the Greek Community. She graduated with highest honors (Bronze Tablet University Honors for being in the top 3% of her graduating class).

“Since I was determined to attend medical school, I was very dedicated to studying, but still managed to maintain a healthy balance of family and friends in my life. Now looking back, I can’t believe how fast those years flew by and I truly believe that I matured tremendously over those few short years through every experience I had,” she said. During the winter

of her senior year, she volunteered for a Medical Missions Trip in Nigeria with Dr. Vivek Kantayya (who later joined the U of I Rockford College of Medicine Faculty—her medical school).

“Seeing the compassion he had for the Nigerians, along with his medical expertise, further solidified my desire to become a doctor and be able to help those in desperate need of medical care. After all, giving of yourself is the best gift one can give,” she said.

In August 2006, she started medical school at the University of Illinois. Her first year was in Urbana-Champaign and she is now in her third year at the Rockford School of Medicine (University of Illinois College of Medicine is on four different campuses: Rockford/Peoria/Urbana-Champaign/Chicago—she attends the Rockford campus.)

“My first year of medical school was very strenu-



ANDREA HYSER (GIAMALVA), 2002 scholarship winner, with (from left) current TOI President Richard Ralston (Oblong Township Supervisor), the late Robert Turner who was Belvidere Township Supervisor and TOI Director, Andrea; and Mickey Goral, Rockford Township Supervisor and currently TOI’s 1st Vice President.

ous and probably one of my most difficult educational years. At any given time we had nine different classes to balance, as well as labs and extra-curricular activities," she said. "This year was a whirlwind of core medical science classes, memorizing hundreds of anatomical structures, new friends, and getting a glimpse of what a life in medicine is all about."

Two weeks after finishing her first year, Giamalva, native of Belvidere Township (Boone Co.) moved back to the Belvidere/Rockford area to begin her second year of medical school.

"After all, giving of yourself is the best gift one can give."

— *Andrea Giamalva*

"I feel very blessed to be a part of this program as all the staff and faculty are incredibly supportive of our educational goals as well as our personal life goals. I can't imagine a better place to be: I am now attending medical school in my hometown, surrounded by friends and family, which makes getting through the long days and late nights much easier. Rockford is also an exceptional program because it is more of a community-based program, meaning that we, as medical students, have much more interaction with physicians on a one-on-one basis. We also have the opportunity to participate in more procedures and are very involved in patient care. Most medical students don't reach this type of experience until late into their residency programs after graduating medical school! This has proven to give us, in Rockford, a much better idea of which area of medicine we would like to pursue."

"I have already delivered two babies with my own two hands—not to mention the numerous deliveries I have observed or assisted in. I have also been involved in more than 75 surgical procedures. Medical school is just like a full-time job. A typical day for me starts as early as 6:00 AM for lecture or 'pre-rounding' on patients (seeing them before the doctor does that day so that we can report on how they are doing). Most days end at 5 or 6 PM, unless there is a later lecture or I am on call. Outside of our daily routine, we also must find time to study, since there is a standardized exam at the end of each rotation."

This year, Giamalva is busy with clinical rotations, as well as her job as a Microbiology Teaching Assistant. She sets up review sessions, makes review lectures, creates practice questions and meets with students who need extra help. She is also the student representative for a new free clinic in Rockford, "The Bridge Clinic."

"I have also had the wonderful opportunity to be involved with a program called 'The Underserved Pathway.' This program was started this year by the

same physician I had the privilege to go to Nigeria with, Dr. Kantayya. It is geared toward students who have a desire to serve the underserved. Through this program, I have been able to volunteer at a Migrant Farm Worker's Clinic, where I am able to use the skills I have learned in medical school, as well as use my Spanish-speaking abilities."

Giamalva's current plans are to go into Family Practice.

"I am a problem solver and like to see the whole picture when meeting with a patient. I would like to manage patient healthcare and be an advocate for healthy living. I am also interested in possible focus on Women's Health and/or Nutritional Medicine in my future practice. I also look forward to the ability to utilize my profession in all areas of my life—helping friends and family, going on more Medical Missions Trips, and volunteering in the community at places like The Bridge Clinic."

It's back to school for engineer



For Jeff Large, it all goes back to his Lincoln Logs days.

"My interest in structures can probably be traced to my childhood," said the structural engineer. "I played with Legos, Lincoln Logs and Tinkertoys quite a bit."

After Large graduated from Taylorville High School in 2002, he enrolled in the General Engineering department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He obtained a summer internship with the Illinois Department of Transportation after his freshman year and decided that transferring to the Civil and Environmental Engineering department was the right career path, choosing a primary concentration in structures and a secondary concentration in water resources.

"... returning to school after two years away proved to be much more difficult than I had anticipated."

— *Jeff Large*

"During my senior year, I interviewed with several companies through Engineering Career Services and through campus job fairs. I had a very difficult decision on whether or not to continue for my master's degree or begin my professional career. The decision became much easier when I received an offer from Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, Inc. (CMT) as a structural engineer in their Springfield office," said Large.

"I was assigned to the Water and Wastewater busi-

ness unit and quickly began working on several wastewater projects throughout Central Illinois,” he said. Large was involved in building new wastewater treatment facilities in Springfield and in Fenton, MO, and with a pedestrian walkway at the SIU Cancer Center in Springfield.

“My desire to obtain my master’s degree never went away and after several discussions with CMT management, we decided that I would return to UIUC last fall to complete my master’s degree in civil engineering with a concentration in structures.”

Large will finish his degree in August and return to Springfield to work for CMT in September.

“While I would not change my decision of working before going to graduate school, returning to school after two years away proved to be much more difficult than I had anticipated. My future professional goals are to obtain my Professional Engineer’s license, as well as my Structural Engineer’s license, and hopefully transition into a management role at some point in my career at CMT.”

Large, from Locust Township (Christian Co.), is an avid supporter of Illini sports teams but focuses most of his time on football and men’s basketball.

“I make an effort to play basketball and golf as much as my schedule allows. While I was in Springfield, I was active in the Capital Chapter of the Illinois Society of Professional Engineers, where we hold community activities that encourage students to consider a career in engineering. I also helped out with a Habitat for Humanity house last summer through a CMT-sponsored build day. I am not currently involved in any specific township or community role but would be interested in doing so when I return to Springfield in September.”

From Peace Corps to medicine



“Somewhere between leaving high school and my third year of college, I realized there is more to life than just getting where you think you need to go.”

Sarah Anderson graduated from the University of Illinois in 2005, and



SARAH ANDERSON, 2002 scholarship winner shown with former TOI President Barbara Weyrick (Lyons Township Assessor), and from left: Hanover Township Trustee Robert Goffinski, Clerk Brian McGuire, Supervisor Mike Kelly and former Trustee Joe Conti.

served two years as an Integrated Education/Youth Development Peace Corps volunteer in a town of 2,600 in the southernmost region of Bolivia.

The Hanover Township (Cook Co.) native is now a first year medical student at UI-Chicago. She recently moved to Edgewater, a neighborhood on the far north side of Chicago.

“Throughout my time in Bolivia, I held a reading club twice a week with local 7-11-year-olds; worked with the facilitators of a preschool organization to teach their educators hygiene, nutrition, and teaching methods and taught the facilitators basic computer skills; helped initiate two self-sustainable recycling programs in elementary schools in nearby towns; and team-taught HIV/AIDS in the local high school with Bolivian teachers.”

Bolivia is one of the least developed countries in South America. Almost two-thirds of its people, many of whom are subsistence farmers, live in poverty.

“I accepted the first assignment they offered me, though I ashamedly knew very little about Bolivia. The work would be health-related, which would be beneficial to my future career, and I didn’t really care where I was sent. The point was to leave my comfort zone and go do some good somewhere. And yes, my comfort zone was very comfortable,” Anderson said.

Anderson said her family’s middle class lifestyle

**“It was the best decision of my life.
It was the most difficult thing I’ve
ever done.”**

— Sarah Anderson

was not excessive, but she always had what she needed.

“I feel like I was brought up to be very practical and able to distinguish between necessity and luxury, and I am so grateful to my parents for that. They have also been extremely supportive of every decision I have ever made.

“It was the best decision of my life. It was the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. I was challenged every single day in new and unpredictable ways. Learning the language, being open to the culture, being far from everything familiar, having white skin, being American in a time and country where that received mixed sentiments, getting bad news from home and not being able to do anything about it, and the list goes on and on. Everyone’s experience is different. Everyone handles their personal challenges differently.”

Peace Corps volunteer Walter Poirier was lost in Bolivia in 2001, yet to be found, Anderson said, but her family supported her decision to go even after they learned this.

“Coming back to the U.S. was interesting. I don’t think I experienced a “reverse culture shock” of the same intensity as many volunteers do upon their return. I came home twice during my service—once for my brother’s wedding and again to do medical school interviews—so I was able to reconnect with home periodically over the two years. I still don’t do very well in supermarkets when faced with 18 different kinds of toilet paper. I still can’t get over how obese everyone is and how excessive our consumption is and how it’s not entirely our fault,” she said. “We have the resources to create industries that research the most effective ways to get people to do things that are bad for them. Are there better things to put our energy toward? Yes. Are there people putting energy toward them? Yes. Everyone needs to make a living so that they can consume more. I haven’t quite decided how I will contribute to this society yet.

“I try to stay as active as possible in my minimal free time, and that currently involves training for a half marathon I will run in April. I hope to also get re-involved with rugby, which I played during college at UIUC. One step at a time—I’m not yet sure what specialty I will pursue when I get my MD, and I think that’s the next major decision I will have to make ... in a couple years.

“I just got involved with a program called Project FLOW (Future Leaders of the World) that aims

Seven more students will win scholarships this year

TOI’S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM begins its 21st year of helping outstanding students achieve even more through higher education.

It all started in 1983 when the TOI Board of Directors approved awarding two scholarships, but it wasn’t until six years later that the first two scholarships were presented.

Former TOI Director Dorothy Mathews, now deceased, spearheaded the TOI scholarship program during her 10-year tenure on the board. In the February 2003 *Township Perspective*, the former Chemung Township (McHenry County) clerk recalled the TOI meeting when the first collection for the scholarship fund was taken in a cardboard box.

“I thought it was time we did something for our young people. Children are growing up and they don’t realize what local government is,” said Mathews. “So many people are not conversant with township government.”

Today, TOI’s scholarship program is funded by donations from TOI Divisions, Township Officials of Cook County and individuals. 128 students applied in last year’s program.

Winners of the seven \$2,000 scholarships to be awarded this year will be chosen later this month.

to inspire inner city high school students in Chicago to create positive change in their communities and connect them with resources to do so,” she said. “I will be a Project Mentor for one student and help him or her articulate the vision of the project, create a plan, and implement that plan.”

More information can be found at: <http://www.mycommitment.org/node/4637>.

“What excites me about this project is the same thing that attracted me to Peace Corps, namely the idea of encouraging locals to assess and address their own community’s needs,” said Anderson.



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