

National insurance company selects Butler County teen for top \$25K scholarship; teen selects BC3

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Isabella Donaldson, 17, of Sarver, Butler County, has won a Nebraska insurance company's top national scholarship of \$25,000 and will attend Butler County Community College.

(Butler, PA) A western Pennsylvania 17-year-old who carried a straight-A average in her senior year, assisted widows with yardwork and volunteered at first-responder fundraisers has been awarded a Nebraska insurance company's top national scholarship of \$25,000 and has chosen Butler County Community College to pursue her dream of educating children.

"I love little kids," said Isabella Donaldson, of Sarver, Butler County, who will graduate Friday from Calvary Academy, Butler, where she has earned straight A's in 11 of her 12 years.

“I love shaping their minds, helping them to love to learn. They are just a joy to me.”

WoodmenLife, a member-owned not-for-profit fraternal life insurance company based in Omaha, presented one \$25,000 scholarship from 625 high school and college applicants nationwide.

Donaldson was among students who submitted transcripts, a list of their activities and volunteer efforts, and wrote an essay about patriotism.

WoodmenLife also awarded single scholarships of \$20,000 and \$10,000; 10 \$1,000 scholarships and 612 \$500 scholarships, according to its announcement.

“A lot of my friends have gone to BC3”

Donaldson will study early childhood education (Pre K-4) at BC3, where her father, Paul, studied business management in 1995 and 1996.

“I have actually been considering BC3 for a long time,” Donaldson said. “A lot of my friends have gone to BC3 and they all had good things to say about it. My friends said the teachers are very good and really nice, and that they learned a lot.”

BC3,” Donaldson added, is “close to home. It’s my first step. And I want BC3 to be my first step.”

Donaldson learned about the WoodmenLife Focus Forward Scholarships from recruiting sales manager Zachary Kile, of York, who worked 10 years in Butler and whose wife, the former Tawnie Osborne, graduated from BC3 in 2007 with an associate degree in elementary education.

“Isabella,” Kile said, “always has a smile on her face and wants to encourage and be an example to others around her.”

Kile encouraged Donaldson to apply.

“I was speechless” when picked for \$25K

Donaldson’s transcripts show that she has been named to Calvary Academy’s A honor roll every year since first grade – with the exception of her sophomore year – “algebra,” she said – when she was named to the B honor roll for having a grade of B on her report card.

Her activities and volunteer efforts include judging a pet parade at the Saxonburg Ambulance carnival in each of the past four Julys, working at fish dinners benefiting the Saxonburg Volunteer Fire Company twice a year since 2017 and performing yardwork, painting and

cleaning for widows – “Whatever they need,” she said – who are members of her church, Calvary Baptist.

Patriotism, she wrote in her 154-word essay, “does not mean that we all have to look alike to be under one nation. Everyone has their own personality. But what makes a nation strong is when people come together despite their differences and learn to work together for the greater good.”

Scholarship America, an independent third-party administrator, reviewed applications, said Mickey Pennington, of York, community outreach adviser for WoodmenLife’s northeast region.

Patrick L. Dees, WoodmenLife president and CEO, then called her, Donaldson said.

“He asked me what my goals and accomplishments were,” Donaldson said. “And he asked me what I wanted to do. And I told him and he said, ‘Well, I would like to help you make that dream come true. You won \$25,000.’ And I was speechless.”

Largest single award in principal’s 32 years at school

Hers is the single-largest scholarship to be awarded to a Calvary Academy student in the 32 years he has been at the 37-year-old school, said Dr. Joel Ward, principal.

“She has worked really hard to make sure she has gotten straight A’s and kept her grade-point average up,” Ward said.

A number of her teachers at Calvary Academy also attended BC3, Donaldson said, as did her father, her principal’s son, James, her WoodmenLife recruiting sales manager’s wife – and Donaldson’s friends.

“BC3,” she said, “has a very good teaching program.”

Donaldson plans to transfer to Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania after completing her associate degree at BC3.