

# 2009 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER - SARA LEAVITT OF BANTAM, CT

## *MY LEAVITT HERITAGE*

My family has always been an extremely important element of my life. For as long as I can remember, family reunions and gatherings have been cherished moments in my life. Ever since I was little, my dad's side of the family has always come together for holidays and long weekends. All of the fourteen grandchildren and their parents gather at my grandpa's house for days of touch football games and barbeques and nights of hide and seek in the basement. Yet even as we get older and no longer enjoy games such as these, we all find ourselves making time for our family get-togethers, because we know there will never be a dull moment. My family provides me with love and support in everything I do, and I always look forward to spending time with them. As a part of the Leavitt family, I have learned the importance of respect, education, and understanding. I hope to be able to pass these traits on to my children as I grow older and have a family of my own. My family has taught me to put my best effort into my schoolwork and extra curricular activities. It is from their examples that I have learned to cooperate, work well with others, and respect my peers. Yet even beyond these qualities, I have learned to accept the changes and challenges of life and use them to become a better person. When my grandmother passed away a few years ago, my entire family was in a state of sorrow. The day after her death, I joined my family at my grandparent's house. Although I was expecting to walk into a room full of crying relatives, I entered into a room of loving people, who, despite their sadness, were putting together collages and picture frames of all of the memories we had with my grandmother. My grandpa, Donald Leavitt, was sitting at the head of the table, directing my aunts and uncles to collect pictures, articles, and mementos of his wife's life. From that one day, my grandpa taught me that all of our troubles and grievances can be worked out, and that from each obstacle we gain a new perspective on life. I am proud to have grown up in a family that has been able to make such an impact on my life.



## *FUTURE PLANS*

My expectations for my future have changed drastically over the years. As a child, I always hoped to grow up to become a professional soccer player, teacher, and mom all at the same time. As appealing as this may sound, reality and maturity have set in now that I have reached the end of high school. I find myself trying to narrow down my broad range of interests in order to decide which direction to take in the future. Although I am unsure as to what college I will attend next year and what major I will select, I have set goals that I hope to accomplish. I have narrowed my college choices down to my first choice— Pennsylvania State University, along with the University of Connecticut, St. John's University of New York, and Keene State College of New Hampshire. I plan on attending a college that will allow me to experience an environment other than the one I have grown up in. So far, my life experience has mostly been confined to the small town that I live in. In college, I will be able to live and learn in a larger community and broaden my perspective of the world. Once at college, I plan on majoring in a field that involves working with others. I have found myself very interested in teaching, fascinated by psychology and counseling, and as a member of my school's mock trial team for the past eight years, intrigued by law. I feel as though I will have a hard time deciding on a career from the many interests I have attained throughout the years. Whichever direction I choose, however, I hope to involve myself in a career that allows me to reach out to and help others as best I can. I believe that my high school education will help guide me in making the right decisions in the future. I am anxious to learn and experience as much as possible in the years to come.

## *ACADEMIC AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES*

National Honor Society  
National Foreign Language Honor Society  
Mock Trial  
Project Hope Internship  
Student Council – Representative, Vice President  
All-School Student Council – Secretary  
Youth Leadership Council – Vice President  
Spanish Club  
Living Nativity Choir  
Flute Choir  
Bell Choir

Band  
Stage Crew  
Litchfield Hills Road Race – Staff Member/Volunteer  
Community Center Activities – Volunteer  
Kid's Marathon Mentor – Volunteer  
Sports:  
Recreational Soccer  
LHS Girl's Soccer  
Ski Team  
Indoor Track  
Track and Field

# 2009 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER – REBECCA REINBOLD OF ST. CHARLES, IL

## *MY LEAVITT HERITAGE*

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. However, when the same picture is viewed by two different people, the meaning of the picture can be completely different. For example, some people might look at an old black and white photo and only see a one room school house teacher and her class. However in my eyes, I see my great grandma Gertrude Leavitt Barry and all her accomplishments and struggles in one 8x10 photograph.

My great grandmother was a teacher off and on for almost thirty years. She taught in a little one room school house for six years in Vermont and later in high schools in New York. When I look at my picture of her, it is easy to imagine how hard teaching must have been back then. When I was younger, I remember staring at that photo for so long it was almost as if I was studying it. I would look at that picture and dwell on the question, how did she do it? On a day to day basis, she had to deal with students not showing up to class because they had to stay home and work on their family farm. On the other hand, when the students did show up to class, she had to have multiple levels of academic work because no two students were ever at the exact same level. In the photo, her students ranged from the age of five to sixteen and she herself was only seventeen years old at the time.

I am only one year older than she was and I can honestly say I would not be able to do what my great grandma Gertrude did at this age. Thinking about all the work she put into teaching her students is truly inspiring. Back then, they didn't have new class book sets every year or paper to write on like we do. They would have to hand down or share books during class and the students had to write on slates. The school did not even have lights! This was always so interesting to me because it made me stop and think that if my great grandma could do it back then with practically no supplies, why couldn't I do it with all the resources we have today? However, even though they didn't have much, nothing would stop my great grandma. No matter what the factors were, my great grandma Gertrude dedicated herself to her students to give them the best education she could. Due to this, I feel that she shows the true Leavitt spirit.

Gertrude Olivia Leavitt-Barry was a wonderful woman. In times when women didn't have the same opportunity as we do today, she accomplished so much. She started as a rural farm

girl, got a good education to put herself through college. She then obtained a teaching degree and in 1918 ended up as a secretary for the U.S. War Department in Washington DC during World War I.



Learning all this after years of bedtime stories about my great grandma Gertrude, I am flattered that such an amazing woman is part of my heritage. I feel her ability to defeat every struggle that was placed in front of her is the real meaning behind the Leavitt spirit. I believe that Gertrude Leavitt-Barry is an exceptional example of the Leavitt heritage. She shows the Leavitt spirit that with continuous hard work and determination you can achieve as much success as you want. Even when the times were tough, like during the depression, the Leavitts pull together and grow stronger. In the future, one can look back and see how we Leavitts never gave up and will never give up. So next time you look at an old black and white photo, don't jump to conclusions about the history of it

because what may be a normal school house teacher to you is a woman who demonstrates the perseverance of an entire family line to me.

## *FUTURE PLANS*

Finding the right college is a very stressful part of a high school student's life. For me, I have always known that I would go to a larger college or university. A large school offers you the luxury of being dependent yet the honor and atmosphere of a prestige education. After working hard all through high school, I am currently in the top 20% of my 532 student body with a GPA of 4.86 on a 5.0 scale. Proving to myself that I can succeed in high school, I know that with my determination I will also be able to succeed in college.

After graduating from high school with high honors, I plan on attending Illinois State University in the field of Education. Illinois State will be a great fit for me because it is ranked as one of the top schools for Education majors. My ideal future plans include graduating from Illinois State University with a Bachelors Degree in Education. Shortly after, I hope to start my career as an educator, teaching the youth of America. After I have established myself as a teacher my next ambition will be to achieve the position of head softball coach at a local high school. In conclusion, I set high standards for myself, but I know I will be persistent and determined to achieve all my goals.

## *AWARDS AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES*

All Region Softball Player  
All-Academic Softball Conference Player (2 Yrs)  
All-Conference Softball Player (2 Yrs)  
All Area Softball Player (2 Yrs)  
High School Varsity Softball Captain (2 Yrs)  
Softball Team MVP  
Kane County Softball Athlete Of The Week  
Human Relations Award (2 Yrs)  
Breakfast Of Champions Award (2 Yrs)  
Junior Academic High Honors Award  
Regional History Fair Champion  
National Honors Society

Certificate Of Professional Leadership Development  
People To People Organization Nomination  
Student Council (3 Yrs)  
Peer Leadership (2 Yrs)  
H.O.P.E. Club (Helping Others Protect Each Other)  
NHS  
Canoe Club (2 Yrs)  
P.E. Leaders  
Super Fan Club  
Coached Softball Clinic (3 Yrs)  
Held Coat And Food Drive (3 Yrs)  
See Saw A-thon