

Julia Greer, a Grade 11 student at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, is this year's winner of the Deborah and Srdjan Adventure Scholarship. Greer is headed to France for three weeks in the summer.

(Colin Corneau / Brandon Sun)



Dream adventure in France awaits scholarship winner

BY EVA WASNEY

While February might be a tad early to start daydreaming about summer, Grade 11 student Julia Greer knows she'll be spending part of her break in France.

Last weekend, Greer found out she would be fulfilling a lifelong dream as this year's recipient of the Deborah and Srdjan Adventure Scholarship.

"I've always wanted to travel and I've always wanted to study a foreign language so I figured this would just be perfect," said the Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School student.

This summer's three-week adventure will be Greer's first time overseas and while she hasn't picked a destination in France yet, her heart is set on developing her French vocabulary.

"I kind of got hooked in Grade 9 when I first realized all the different opportunities (and) that French can open a door for you," Greer said, adding that she's had to take a year off the language because of class scheduling conflicts. "I do read French on my own time, mostly whatever I can find on the Internet, just to refresh myself."

This is the ninth year former Brandon resident Deborah Grant and her husband Srdjan Tanjga have given out the Adventure Scholarship, which covers all the costs of a trip abroad — including spending money, accommodations, language classes and any excursions the students want to take part in.

The couple, who now live in New York, was inspired to create the fund when they got married in 2009.

"Instead of doing a typical wedding registry, we decided that we wanted to do something that would have a different kind of impact," Grant said. "So if our wedding guests wanted to give us a gift we gave them the option to contribute to the scholarship we set up."

Every year, the couple collects applications from students in Brandon and Belgrade, Serbia — where Tanjga is from — and chooses a student from each country to go on an adventure abroad.

As part of the application process, students are asked to write an essay about a person, place, thing or time that has impacted them.

"It's really the essay that gives us a window into what makes them tick and a

little bit of their personality," Grant said. "(Julia's) application really spoke to both me and my husband."

Greer chose her late aunt Janice Greig as the topic for her essay.

"When I was growing up I didn't have a lot of friends ... I spent lots of time at the library reading and I just kept to myself a lot — the librarian was my best friend," she said. "It took me a while to realize that it's OK that I'm different and I like these different things."

Greer says her aunt, who also loved reading, helped her embrace her mature interests.

"We just really bonded over that and it made it a lot easier to grow up knowing that there was someone who was the same as me," she said.

For Grant, this year's Brandon recipient offers an extra bit of excitement.

"We are neutral across schools in Brandon, but we've had a number of recipients from Neelin and Massey ... I went to Crocus for high school so we were particularly excited that our winner this year is from my old school," she said.

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