



Rebecca Storey, a Grade 11 student at Neelin High School, has been chosen to receive this year's Deborah and Srdjan Adventure Scholarship. She will be spending three weeks studying Mandarin in China this summer. (Tim Smith/Brandon Sun)

» DEBORAH AND SRDJAN ADVENTURE SCHOLARSHIP

Essay about fave author earns Neelin student trip to China

BY LINDSEY ENNS

Neelin High School student Rebecca Storey still can't believe that she will be spending three weeks of her summer vacation in China studying Mandarin after being chosen to receive this year's Deborah and Srdjan Adventure Scholarship.

"I just couldn't believe it," said Storey, a Grade 11 student, when Deborah Grant and her husband, Srdjan Tanjga, gave her the good news. "I was so excited, I was jumping up and down, my jaw dropped and I was trying to make words come out."

Since getting married in May 2009, Grant and Tanjga set up a scholarship fund giving two high school students the opportunity to travel to a foreign country and learn a new language every summer. The scholarship is given to one student living in Brandon, where Grant is from, and one student from Belgrade, Serbia, where Srdjan is from.

"We decided that we've both been so fortunate, that people have been just very kind and helpful to us over the years helping us in our own careers that we thought instead of doing a typical wedding registry that we would give people the opportunity to donate to this scholarship," Grant said. "We want people who are going to take this opportunity and build on it and really get the most out of it."

The couple selects the students themselves each year and this year, Storey's essay about her favourite author, Rick Riordan, as well as her own personal connection to China stood out from the other entries.

"The fact that she was adopted from China when she was nine months old and she hasn't returned, to be able to give her that opportunity to go back to her roots and learn the language is just really exciting and it was a powerful message that came across in her essay," Grant said.

Storey said she chose to write about her

favourite author because he has inspired her to pursue writing as a career.

"I just like the freedom of creativity, it's like your own world," she said.

Storey will be heading to China in late June or early July for roughly three weeks, an opportunity that without this scholarship she might not have had.

"I'm really excited about going to China," she said. "I like languages so I'm really excited to learn a new one."

Now that several years have passed since their wedding date, the couple continues to fund the majority of the scholarships themselves, something that they hope to keep doing for many more years to come.

"As long as we are able to do this financially we want to continue doing it," Grant said. "It gives us a lot of joy in being able to offer this opportunity to high school students every year."

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