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Local couple hands out first Adventure Scholarships

Joanne F. Villeneuve



Allison Large will be headed to Shanghai this summer to study Mandarin, thanks to a scholarship set up by a Brandon native and her fiancé. (Colin Corneau/The Brandon Sun)
After sifting through dozens of applications that took an entire weekend to read, Brandon native Deborah Grant and her fiancé Srdjan Tanjga have chosen two recipients for their first ever Adventure Scholarships.

"Picking the winner was not easy at all, since we had many very qualified and deserving candidates," said Grant, who now lives and works in New York.

The couple has established a scholarship fund that will enable two students — one from Brandon and the other from Tanjga's hometown of Belgrade — to study a new language abroad.

Both Grant and Tanjga have enjoyed learning abroad, and their plan is to share their love of travelling and tackling new cultural experiences with young people.

The lucky Brandon student who will be receiving a scholarship is 16-year-old Allison Large, a Grade 11 student at Vincent Massey high school.

She will be attending Shanghai's MandarinRocks language school for four weeks this summer to study Mandarin Chinese.

"I knew that this would open doors for the future because if you can speak another language, it's a good asset to have," said Large, who shares the couple's love of travel. She applied, not thinking hers would be the one chosen.

"I was quite shocked, but very, very excited — I was pretty much bouncing off the walls," said Large, who will be travelling alone. "It'll be an adventure and I think I'll enjoy it a lot."

She chose Mandarin, which would be helpful in either law or business, the areas of study she'd like to focus on in the future.

Her counterpart in Belgrade is Nevena Popovic, who will be heading to the United States to study English.

"We are extremely excited about our recipients, Allison and Nevena. They are both ambitious and accomplished — as were many other candidates — but their personalities really shone through in their applications. They are warm, caring and each have a strong sense of purpose," Grant said.

"When we called them to tell them the good news, they were speechless and very humble, which confirmed to us that we had made the right choice. These two young ladies are going places in life, and we're happy and honoured to be a part of their journey."

All Brandon high school students who wish to study a language abroad can apply for this scholarship, which covers all expenses including travel, room and board, tuition and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses.

Applications for summer 2010 will be accepted from mid-September to mid-November 2009.

Anyone wishing to donate to the scholarship fund or to find out more information, visit dsadventurescholarship.com.