



Community Caring

President's scholarship winner credits her community and its caring members for her volunteer spirit

"IT'S REALLY NOT JUST one person. It takes a lot of people to help you become who you are," Skye Brucklacher states with certainty. And when she says a lot of people, she means a lot of people; probably somewhere in the neighborhood of 850, or, the entire population of Philip, South Dakota.

According to our 2008 President's scholarship winner, Skye Brucklacher, not only did many of the individual citizens of Philip have great influence in her life, but so did the community as a whole. Skye describes Philip as a close-knit community, one where people know you and recognize your accomplishments.

Philip is also the type of place where a common cause can transcend many barriers and bring people together. "It doesn't matter how old you are, where you work, or what your background is,

anyone can volunteer," Skye says. This is a lesson that she has learned firsthand from her involvement with NMB Philip Branch 85.

Skye admits that she didn't really know what she was getting herself into when she agreed to join Branch 85 as a youth representative. At first it was a little challenging for her to relate to others on the Board; she was one of only two youth members and the other people came



For many years, Skye helped with "Maggie Grace's" Angel Tree at the Philip Courthouse, collecting Christmas gifts for area children in need.

from many different backgrounds.

Although Skye had to learn a little bit about how to interact with some of the adult branch members, ultimately they all came together with a unified goal to help those in need. The branch also had the support of the entire community behind them. "Our community just does a lot of things together and everyone show up for the benefits that NMB puts on everyone shows up for. We get really good turnouts," Skye shares.

And just as the community is dedicated to helping others, Skye is dedicated to helping her community.

When an alcohol-related driving accident affected Philip, Skye initiated a "Drive Wise to Stay Alive" campaign through her high school's FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) chapter. FCCLA is an organization for high school students that promotes leadership by getting young people involved in their communities by implementing projects they have created.

A team of about 35 helped with this



safe driving campaign. Skye designed signs, T-shirts, and key chains to help increase awareness of the project. Her large vinyl signs were placed in the front of the high school and along the town's main highway and the permanent buckle-up signs were attached to the stop signs at the school entrances. Key chains were given to students who signed a "safe driving" pledge. Skye also performed seatbelt checks in the student parking lot and at the gate at the homecoming football game.

As a result of her involvement in this project, Skye was one of two FCCLA members chosen to attend the National Teen Driver Safety Summit in Washington, D.C. The "Drive Wise to Stay Alive" project is one of Skye's most memorable volunteer experiences to date (out of a very long list!).

Although one of her most memorable volunteer experiences came in high school, Skye actually began volunteering in elementary school when she helped

Grandma (Lenore) Brucklacher clean garbage out of roadside ditches. Skye's parents also influenced her by engaging her in their own volunteer activities.

Her father, Bruce, is part of the local volunteer fire department, where Skye has volunteered to help with registration and play the flute at events. Her mother, Brigitte, is a teacher and the advisor for FCCLA. Skye attended her first national FCCLA meeting with her mom when she was in sixth grade.

"Just being with your parents helps you so much ... even though sometimes I might think that they don't know what they are talking about, they do know and they help a lot," Skye admits. In fact, one of Skye's favorite things to do is spend time with her parents and her little brother Gavin who is 13.

Skye is in her first semester of college at Black Hills State University. She is pursuing a degree in elementary education. Though she chose this field because

One of Skye's most memorable volunteer experiences was being involved in the FCCLA "Drive Wise to Stay Alive" campaign. Pictured far left, Skye stands with fellow FCCLA members next to one of the campaign banners and Philip's "Scottie Dog" mascot wearing his seatbelt. To the left, in their official red FCCLA blazers, Skye (far right) and two FCCLA officers present the project to the Philip School Board. Below, Philip students (Skye is third from left) serve cake for the celebration of life event to kick off the "Drive Wise" campaign on August 27, 2008. It would have been the 18th birthday of Skye's cousin, Dallas, who was killed in an alcohol-related car accident in May 2007.

she has always enjoyed working with young children, Skye also acknowledges that her mother's teaching background probably had some impact as well.

While in college, Skye hopes to gain a lot of friends and get the experience in full. She will be playing flute in the band and would like to get involved in additional activities.

Upon graduation, Skye hopes to find a good job in a smaller community, possibly even Philip. "No doubt about it that coming from the small community I did helped me become the person that I am," Skye shares. "There are so many opportunities in a small community that people don't realize." This is certainly true of Skye's experience in Philip.

Skye has found the beauty that can exist within the narrow boundaries of a tiny town. She recognizes that her town is special because the people there really care about one another. Between her band teacher, school secretary, school guidance counselor, Branch 85 members, family, and community elders, Skye has many who she can rely on. "When you're down or something, they really help you see the other side of the story and they help you with a lot of things," she says.

As Skye begins her new journey away from the place she loves so much, there's no doubt that she will carry with her the values and lessons learned there. This knowledge will empower her to do great things and help many people along the way. Congratulations, Skye, and best of luck on all your endeavors! ♦