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Local News

Luxenburg scholarship recipients carry the torch

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It is a good thing that Sarah Fingerhut's greatnaunt Sandra Thompson reads the CJN.

She zeroed in on the April 27 article, "Scholarship established in memory of teacher." It described the creation of The Tricia Luxenburg Memorial Scholarship Fund for college students majoring in education.



"My goal is to be half as good a teacher as Tricia was." Sarah Fingerhut

The scholarship honors the memory of the late Cleveland Heights University Heights teacher Tricia Luxenburg, who lost her battle with cancer at age 32 in May 2006. She left behind her husband Mitchell and four small children.

Thompson was confident that her niece, then a freshman majoring in education at Bowling Green State University with a 3.7 GPA, would be an ideal candidate for the scholarship.

"I knew that I met the scholarship criteria," recalls Fingerhut, 19. "But I also had to pass a personal interview with Mitch (Luxenburg)."

The two met at Caribou Coffee at LaPláce in late April. Fingerhut described her passion for teaching. She also spoke about her big, supportive family, her love of children, and her interest in becoming a history teacher.

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The Solon High School graduate told Luxenburg that when she was 9, she lost her mother to cancer, and when she was 11, her aunt succumbed to breast cancer.

“That experience, so similar to what happened to Tricia’s family, was very painful, but it made me even stronger as a person,” Fingerhut says.

“When I spoke to Sarah, I was struck by her innocence,” recalls Solon resident Luxenburg. “I learned how her father had to raise his two daughters alone and how close the family has become. She has a great academic record and has been an amazing volunteer. Within five minutes of meeting her, I knew she was a handsdown winner of one of the two academic scholarships.”

The other recipient of the Tricia Luxenburg scholarship is Quinci Teer, an incoming freshman at Rio Grande Community College in Ohio.

Coming from a family of educators, Teer says, “Tricia’s legacy as a teacher is very important to me. She suffered through cancer and still ran life’s race to the fullest.”

“Both Quinci and Sarah collectively made the perfect package for Tricia’s scholarship,” says Luxenburg. “When I spoke to Quinci’s mother, she was as passionate about her child’s abilities and potential as Tricia would have been about one of our children. I’m incredibly proud of both recipients. Tricia would have been pleased, too.”

Fingerhut and Teer were honored at the “In the name of ...” fundraiser May 11 at Landerhaven. The dinner raised \$65,000 earmarked for scholarship money.

In her acceptance speech, Fingerhut noted, “I’ve learned so much about what an amazing person Tricia was. She accomplished so much in her short life and touched so many people. My goal is to be half as good a teacher as Tricia was.”

Luxenburg plans to hold another fundraiser next year if the interest remains strong. “Those who knew and loved Tricia believe that her life will be honored by her ability to continue to educate children through her scholarship in the coming years.”

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