

The RLIA
Attn Scholarship Fund
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Rush Lake Improvement Association Scholarship Essay

My name is Rachel Norma Piersdorf, and I have spent most of my weekends during my life visiting Rush Lake. Every Sunday my grandma makes a huge meal, and we all go up to the lake to visit with our family. We then go out fishing, or ice-skating if it is winter, and sometimes we just sit and talk. Three generations of my family have lived there. From my Great-Grandma and Great-Grandpa Orlando, to my Grandma and Grandpa McKenzie, to my Aunt Debbie and Uncle Wayne, we have all enjoyed Rush Lake. Someday I hope to live there.

Rush Lake holds so many firsts for me. I learned my first song sitting on the steps of my great-grandparent's house. My great-grandma taught me how to sing, "How Much is that Doggie in the Window." I can still hear her voice singing in my ear. I learned how to swim for the first time with my dad holding me up in the water towards the shore and slowly walking me out deeper into the lake. I took my first steps on ice skates while holding onto a small lawn chair so I wouldn't trip, and with my great-grandma right behind me ready to catch me in case I fell backwards. I learned how to fish on the lake, and although I was never very good at it, I still enjoy it a lot. My great-grandpa was the first to settle down in a little cabin on the lake, where my great-grandparents eventually came to live, and my great-grandma was the first to start the tradition of Sunday dinners. I can still remember sitting on the chair swing, that still stands in my grandparent's front yard, waiting for everyone to come home from fishing, looking out at the lake, and watching all of the people boating and skiing and fishing. I was present at the first Sheepshead Tournament when I was just an infant. My grandparents host this tournament every year, and I have participated in it ever since I was old enough to hold one of those small Snoopy fishing poles. I felt so special when I was finally able to go out fishing with all the adults. I don't think I ever caught a sheepshead, but I still love it. I celebrated my first, and every birthday since, at the lake. I would never celebrate my birthday anywhere else. You can probably tell by now that I basically grew up on the lake.

I also grew up hearing stories about the lake, from when my mom was young. My mom loves telling me stories about how her and her friends would bike up to the lake all the way from North St. Paul. Or how my great-grandma would pick up all of her grandchildren, my mom included, and pile them all into her rambler and stop for a special treat of ice cream on the way up. Even when my great-grandma was long gone, and my great-grandpa had turned a hundred and two, he still enjoyed telling me stories. He was always smiling when he told them, even if his teeth weren't in! His favorite days were when we would pick him up from the nursing home and bring him to the lake with a box of White Castle Burgers. I think he was always happiest there. I miss them both terribly, but I know how he felt, because I am definitely happiest when I'm spending time at the lake, and I feel closest to them, and their memory when I am there. I hope to carry the Rush Lake tradition on with my children and grandchildren someday. I guess that what

Rush Lake means to me is family. Rush Lake is where I see and spend time with my family. And I believe that family is one of the most important things to me of all.

Although I spend a lot of time at Rush Lake, I actually live in Forest Lake. (However I think I've spent more time at Rush Lake than on the lake in my hometown!) I attend Forest Lake Senior High School, and throughout my time there I have been involved in many activities. I've lettered in academics both my sophomore and junior years, and I have been in plays there for three years. My sophomore year I was Winnie in "Annie Get Your Gun," and Amy in "Little Women." I also received the Outstanding Acting Newcomer award. My junior year I was a bag lady in "Little Shop of Horrors," and Witney in "Good Morning Miss Vickers." This year I starred as Dolly in our fall musical "Hello Dolly." I also lettered in theatre both my sophomore and junior years. Theatre has been such a big part of my life for a long time. Other roles I have played in community theatre are Annie in "Annie," Alice in the musical "Alice in Wonderland," and this summer I played one of my dream roles. I was Liesl in "The Sound of Music."

Another activity that I have been involved in is Speech. I am currently captain of the Speech team and have been in the categories of storytelling, drama, humor, and duo. My sophomore year I placed second at sections in storytelling and advanced to state. I also received the Outstanding Newcomer award. My junior year I placed fifth at sections in humor, and also made it to the semi-final round at the national qualifying tournament. I received the Outstanding Interpretation award that year. This year I was in three categories. I lettered in speech both years. I plan to go to sections in storytelling, and I made it to the semi-final round at the national qualifying tournament. Because of Speech, I am also a member of the National Forensic League, and have earned the degree of Special Distinction. Speech and theatre have meant so much to me in high school. I've met so many people, not only in my school, but from others as well, and I learned things that I know I will remember always.

Some other activities that I've participated in are Choir, SADD, Student Council and NHS. I've been in choir for three years and I love to sing. My sophomore year I received a superior rating on my solo and the solo/ensemble contest, and this year I received a superior rating on both my solo and my duet. I also sing in a trio with two of my friends. We've performed at many choir concerts and other events. This year we sang at a memorial service at Fairview Hospital in Wyoming. I've volunteered much of my time outside of school as well to sing at hospitals and nursing homes.

I've been in Student Council for two years. Last year I was one of the Historians. It was our job to make advertisements for events, and I was in charge of keeping the display case current and colorful. I was in SADD for three years as well, and I am still on the list of Yellow Ribbon lifelines in our high school. This year I am in NHS. So far I have 18 individual hours and I am all done with my group hours. It has been great to have the opportunity to volunteer for so many things.

One of my favorite activities by far has to be Youth Performing Arts. We are a non-profit Christian organization that puts on plays for the community. I've been in YPA for four years and have had many roles. Some of my favorites have been Aysha (Shem's Wife) in "Children of Eden," Madame Thenardier in "Les Miserables," The Ghost of Christmas Present in "A Christmas Carol," and I have just been cast in another dream role, The Narrator in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." Even when I am in college I plan to continue to help with the group.

With all of this performing experience you can probably guess what I want to do in college. I plan to study theatre and music at the University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts. They have a fantastic theatre and music program, and I have just been accepted to the honors program there. I do not know what will become of these two things, but I just have to follow my dream. I know that if I don't I will always look back and wonder what might have been.

Unfortunately to follow this dream I will need financial support. Two years ago my father was laid off from his job, and he has been struggling to start his own business ever since. My mother is a teacher and has been working very hard to support us, but on a teacher's income, and with five mouths to feed the money seems to disappear as quickly as we acquire it. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to obtain financial support. I know Rush Lake has been a huge part of your lives, as it has been mine. Thank you so much.