

## **Rush Lake Improvement Association Grant Allen Scholarship**

### **Essay**

Hello, my name is Drew Reilly. I am a senior at Braham Area High School and I have lived on Rush Lake for my entire life. It is very hard to put into words what this lake means to me. Some, most in fact, of my best memories of my childhood and high school years have been made floating in a boat on its waters, sitting on its ice in the winter, and having campfires on its shore. Many of my aunts and uncles have cabins around West Rush and I spend just about every weekend of my summers floating from cabin to cabin to see them and spend time with my cousins. This lake is where I learned to fish and gained a passion for the outdoors. It is a peaceful place where I can go and relax with friends or just sit quietly by myself. In my youth, I became so attached to this lake that I used to tell people that's where I lived as if it were my address. Even though my address was Stanchfield and I went to school in Braham, I always said I was from Rush Lake. Indeed when my brother Ryan graduated for St. Cloud State last year, they announced his hometown as Rush Lake and I plan on following suit in this tradition.

In my junior high years I developed a passion for writing. I don't remember exactly how we met, but I met a very kind woman named Kathleen Maloney who ran a newspaper all about Rush Lake, called the Rush Report. Kathleen decided when we met to bestow on me the honor of being the first Junior Reporter for the Rush Report. I was thrilled. So, from sixth through eighth grade I wrote articles for this paper. I wrote about catching sheephead (freshwater drum) and the stones in their heads that people used for jewelry that were actually called otoliths and helped the fish sense where it was in the water. I wrote about catching muskies and the different strains that were stocked in the lake. I wrote about perhaps the most elusive fish, the sturgeon, and the legendary fish that have been pulled from Rush Lake's depths. My last story was supposed to be

about the old gold mine that was rumored to be on Wilson Island. Unfortunately my research was cut short because the current owner of the island was worried about theft. I understood, but took pride in the fact that I had unearthed so much about the island's history. I loved writing and being able to write about something that was so important to me really helped me develop a passion for writing that continues to this day.

My connection to the lake drove me to build my own pontoon boat from scratch at thirteen years old. It became a huge project and me and my Dad worked tirelessly on it. This project helped me develop confidence in my work and self-efficacy. It also allowed me to build a sturdy bond with my father as we created something together that would last for years to come. Last year, I began taking classes at Anoka-Ramsey Community college while still in high school. My first paper I wrote for my first class there was about the process of building this boat, and how it had an impact on my life. I can send that essay in too, if anyone is interested in reading it.

Unfortunately, it is time for me to move away from this great lake for a while. This fall I will be attending the University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management and majoring in Business Management and Finance with a concentration on entrepreneurship. I'm interested in business because I love working with people and innovative ideas. As the son of small business owners, I have been immersed in the complexities that stem from running a company since I was very young and it has become a passion of mine. Businesses in my generation will have to be more fiscally, ethically, and environmentally conscious than ever before, and thus there will need to be managers and CEOs who understand these complex issues. I feel that my place in the world is to be one of these pioneering leaders. In the years to come, I hope to; start and build my own business, start my own scholarship fund, start a family, be a great husband and father, and be a

force for positive change in my community throughout my life. I also have my heart set on returning to the area to build a house on or very near Rush Lake where I can raise my family.

Rush Lake and the people there who I grew up with will always be a part of my life, no matter where I go. It's a bittersweet thing, moving away. However, I am ready for the next big adventure and I am quite confident that my life's path will eventually lead back to the dark waters and rocky shores of my favorite place.