

Success despite difficult odds Corinth senior wins Horatio Alger Award

By Jackie Inouye
Corinth School District

It's been said that the only thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work.

Aimee Bidstrup, senior at Corinth High School Academic and Performing Arts Center and recipient of a Horatio Alger Award is proof that extra effort and a positive outlook have real benefits.

The 25 Horatio Alger Scholarships in Mississippi are given to students who have exhibited character and perseverance despite personal adversity and who aspire to attend a four-year college or university after graduating from high school.

Candidates also must show critical financial need, have good academic standing and be involved with community and co-curricular activities.

Awardees are given \$2,500 to pursue their education.

Bidstrup says she was fairly confident that she would receive an award when she sent in her application and essay last fall.

"I've been through a lot," she said. "My parents divorced. Both of my brothers dropped out of high school so I'm the first to graduate. I've moved around a lot and stayed in a lot of different places. I've had to take care of myself."

Bidstrup grew up in a small town about two hours west of Chicago. Her parents divorced, and her mother moved to Mississippi with her oldest

and youngest brothers. In 2004, Bidstrup and her other older brother decided to move in with their mother.

Although Bidstrup says she does like living in Corinth, it wasn't an easy transition.

"My mom had a lot of boyfriends. One of them that she was with for five years was abusive, so I had to live with that," Bidstrup said.

Other members of her family didn't deal with the changes well. Her older brothers dropped out of high school in their senior years.

"There have been a number of drug problems, not with me, but with other members of my family," Bidstrup said. "Some are addicted to drugs."

The move also brought some positive changes for Bidstrup. Shortly after coming to Corinth, she met and began a relationship with Elijah Cline, her fiancé with whom she has been living for the past year and a half.

They plan to marry in December of this year.

Although some might see a difficult childhood as a reason to give up, Bidstrup has a method and a motivation for overcoming life's obstacles.

"I try to look at the happier part of life," Bidstrup said.

This includes the support of her father, still in Illinois, and her fiancé who "takes care of me and still does now," she says.

"I try to focus on school. Before, I'd go to school and feel happy there, and I tried not to think about what was going on at home."

All of her focus on academics has paid off -- Bidstrup will be attending Northeast Mississippi Community College to study nursing in the fall. Nursing was something that Bidstrup says she always was interested in.

"When I was little when anybody was hurt I wanted to fix it," Bidstrup said.

For the past two years, she has been studying Health Science at Alcorn Career and Technology Center, which gave her a chance to see what the profession is like. She regularly volunteers at several hospices, helps with blood drives and completes other healthcare related service projects as part of the class.

"I liked all of the things that the nurses did and I like working with people a lot," Bidstrup said of her decision to enter the medical field.

In the Northern District Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) competition last year, Bidstrup placed third in practical nursing. She also works at Medical Plaza Pharmacy as a cashier, despite a busy school schedule.

Susie Bates, Bidstrup's Health Science Technology teacher at ACTC, says that Bidstrup has made her life about giving back, not giving up.

"I can see Aimee fulfilling her dream of working as a nurse in the future -- she has the desire, the thirst for knowledge and the energy required of the profession," Bates said.

"The thing about Aimee that impresses me most is her determination to succeed. She has been faced with some terrible trials in her life, but instead of wallowing in pity and apathy, she uses the situations to fuel her desire to rise above her circumstances. She is convinced, and rightly so, that education is the key to her future success."



Photo by Jackie Inouye/Corinth School District

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