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# Big dreams, spirit to match

By CHRISTINE GALT  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Jessica Kuhr is a small town girl who dreams big and travels far. The 19-year-old Nebraska native has traveled to Peru, Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England, always returning home to her family farm outside of Platte Center.

This month, Jessica makes a shorter trip from Platte Center to Sioux City, Iowa, to attend Morningside College on a \$5,000 Ak-Sar-Ben Horatio Alger Scholarship.

Since Jessica was diagnosed with the Epstein-Barr virus, most of the Kuhr family income has gone toward medical bills. Jessica's mom, Karen, has fibromyalgia.

Jessica's compassionate nature can be seen through her leadership in the community. A grandfather with Alzheimer's disease inspired Jessica to work with the Therapy Dogs organization. She recalled how her grandfather "wouldn't remember anyone else, but he would always remember the dogs."

Jessica convinced the local elementary school to begin a Reading Education Assistance Dogs Program. "I really wanted to get involved because when I was sick I didn't read much. Now I love reading. If you dream about being a writer or a doctor or just about anything, it's important to have those skills if you want to go to college."

Jessica's illness forced her to miss important class time and a teacher recommended she be held back. Her parents let Jessica make the decision for herself. She chose to let her friends move forward. "That was the best decision I've ever made," she said. "I saw a lot of my other friends struggle through school and I just breezed through it."

At Morningside, she plans to major in nursing and minor in Spanish. "When you feel bad and you have good nurses, it's really nice," she said of her career choice. "I decided I wanted to be a nurse instead of a doctor because they get to spend time with the patients."

Jessica hopes to take a position with the Red Cross in Peru after college. "I think I'll probably end up coming back to Nebraska, but I really want to see the world."



As a scholarship winner, Jessica Kuhr and her therapy dog, Shadow, have spent hours inspiring schoolkids to read in Platte Center, Neb.