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Young Morton residents win awards to pursue health care careers

Two former Morton High School students have received scholarships to pursue an education in the medical field, the Morton Community Foundation announced this week.

The beneficiaries of the Ilse Droell Memorial Women's Medical Career Scholarships are Olivia Patton, who received \$1,000, and Tori Larrabee, who will put \$750 toward her training.

"The CNA experience has taught me so much, even while realizing the reality of being physically exhausted after working an eight-hour shift ... lifting patients all day," Patton wrote in her winning essay. "I learned I am passionate about direct patient care and frontline work.

"A career in the medical profession is a way to impact lives. I can be there for a patient when their family cannot," she continued. "It has taught me patience, humility, and empathy.



Olivia Patton

“Although there are days I wonder, ‘Why did I choose this?’ ... I could never see myself doing anything else except caring for those in need and making a positive impact in someone's life.”

Larrabee developed a life-threatening infection at the end of her sophomore year and spent a significant portion of her junior year in the hospital.



Tori Larrabee

“While I was robbed of many experiences, events and health that year, I learned much more about the medical field and what it is like to be a patient,” Larrabee wrote in her essay. “The charisma and support the doctors and nurses gave me inspired me to become like them. I also hope to provide a financially supported future for my future family, so they do not have to experience the hardships I have been through.”

Patton is majoring in nursing at Illinois Wesleyan University, while Larrabee attends Illinois State University, where she is working toward her goal of becoming a cardiothoracic surgeon.

This fund was started in 2012 by Hanna Vernon, in memory of her late mother, Ilse Droell. The latter was born in Germany in 1913. When Ilse’s younger brother died of meningitis, she committed to becoming a physician and entered university as one of only four female medical students.

Then she married, and World War II intervened in her life. While her husband was away in the service, she volunteered her medical skills as a village mid-wife and provided care to prisoners in a forced labor camp. After the conflict and post-war occupation were over, 10 years had elapsed, and she was deemed ineligible to complete her medical residency.



Ilse Droell

She spent the rest of her life in Germany, dying on Christmas morning 2010 at the age of 97. She visited family in Morton several times and always “held this country in the highest regard,” her daughter said. “I am glad she will help others to reach their medical education goal through the Ilse Droell Medical Scholarship Fund.”

The fund provides annual scholarships to Morton or Morton Township female students pursuing a career in the medical field, including but not limited to doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, dentist, dental hygienist, veterinarian, etc.

Applicants must be females who will be attending an accredited two- or four-year college or university. Financial need is not the primary consideration in the selection process but may be a factor. An essay explaining the applicant’s interest in medicine must be submitted.

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