

Scholarship helps student reach for the stars

Joann Jones ventures where none in the family have gone before

By Emily Freehling for ATSSA



Scholarship awarded by The American Traffic Safety Services Foundation to help support her studies at Case Western Reserve.

Joann is one of 13 recipients of the scholarship for the 2021-22 academic year.

The competitive scholarship program offers up to \$10,000 annually for dependents of roadway workers killed or permanently disabled in work zone incidents. Students who demonstrate a strong commitment to volunteerism are eligible to apply for an additional \$1,000 given in honor of Chuck Bailey, a roadway safety industry member who died in 2002.

In December 2009, when Jones was 7 years old, her father, Dale Keith Jones, was killed after he was struck by a vehicle while clearing debris from a city road in Anderson, Ind., where the family lived at the time.

Dale Jones worked for the city of Anderson and was helping clear the road about 10 p.m. when the incident occurred.

In 2010, the city of Anderson renamed the road that leads to the city street department office in honor of Jones.

Joann remembers her father as a hard worker who logged long hours to support his family. In his off time, "he was always a really good dad to me."

Joann remembers listening to lots of '80s rock music with her father—AC/DC was a favorite band—and watching movies together.

The night of the accident, Joann said she was upstairs with her mother, Tobi Curran. Her



Joann Jones was 7 years old in December 2009 when her father, Dale Keith Jones, right, was killed while clearing debris from a roadway in Anderson, Ind. Joann's grandfather joined them in this three-generation family photo.

Joann Jones has always been fascinated by the study of the cosmos.

As a child, she watched hours of space documentaries. Now she gets to pursue that passion as a student at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

Joann, 19, hopes to major in astronomy and physics at the university. The first in her family to attend college, she dreams of becoming an astrophysicist.

"It's something I've been interested in my entire life," she said.

The desire to attend college motivated Joann to post an impressive list of achievements

during her high school career in Bluffton, Ind. She won multiple outstanding student awards, was president of the National Honor Society, earned accolades in track and field, and topped it all off by being valedictorian of her graduating class.

The possibility of nabbing the top spot in her senior class first crossed Joann's mind during her freshman year in high school when she learned she was already ranked fourth in her class.

"I thought, 'I might as well be No. 1,'" she recalled.

Her hard work helped Joann earn a Roadway Worker Memorial

father had been paged that night to report to work to help clear a blocked road.

Later, the family heard a banging on the door and received a call from Joann's grandmother, who had heard about the accident. While her mother went to the hospital, Joann and her brother, then a teenager, went to stay with their grandmother.

"That is when I heard that he got hit," Joann remembers.

Joann was still an elementary student at the time and says losing her dad left a void in her young life.

"I didn't want to be mad, but I would always be a little jealous when other people would talk about doing things with their dads," she said.

School events like "Doughnuts with Dad" became a source of sadness.

Despite her loss, Joann devoted her energies to being a good student and finding ways to serve her community. Her academic record is complemented by a lengthy resume of volunteer service.

"It was fun to be with my friends doing things to help the community," she said.

In high school, she volunteered with the Special Olympics, with local childcare providers, at nursing homes and in tutoring younger students.

She wanted to continue her volunteer work in college but the restrictions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic made that difficult during her freshman year, with in-person volunteer opportunities nearly nonexistent. She hoped for a more normal college academic year in the 2021-22 school year.

College was always a big part of Joann's motivation to excel in school and service. She said she had always wanted to attend a



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school with a good science program, where she could live in a city and experience life outside Indiana.

Getting scholarship money to attend college had always been a goal, and Jones said the Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship allowed her to focus on her studies without the stress of taking on large amounts of debt.

The scholarship also allowed her to attend Case Western Reserve, a private school that is more expensive than other schools she had considered. She said the school's smaller environment is a good fit for her.

She likes living in Cleveland and the fact that the university allows her to take classes in various majors, not just her own.

While the pandemic put many of her classes on Zoom, Joann said she particularly enjoyed her physics class, which was mostly in person. She is fascinated by the way physics can help explain some of the smallest and largest phenomena in the universe and she looks forward to continuing that study. She's excited for her cosmology class, which delves into the origins of the universe.

"I am looking forward to getting a better taste of what college is really like," she said of her sophomore year and the easing of pandemic restrictions. "I want to keep up my motivation and keep getting better grades." ///

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