

Brionna Lizotte Says Foundation Scholarship is Like ‘Pennies from Heaven’

Brionna “Bri” Lizotte, who received The Foundation’s Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship, entered her freshman year at Truman State University in Missouri this September. The 18 year old from Camdenton, Mo. is majoring in justice systems with the goal to be a victim advocate when she graduates. The career she’s chosen requires compassion, knowledge of the court system and a desire to support victims of crime who are living through a nightmare. It also calls for providing victims with emotional support, strategizing their safety plans and, in the worst-case scenarios, assisting with funeral arrangements.

The experiences in Lizotte’s young life make her the perfect candidate to help others through a traumatic time in their lives. In 2001, when she was just three years old, Lizotte’s father, Gerald, was tragically killed while transporting materials from a worksite for his job with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) when he was hit by a vehicle. Only a toddler when he passed away, she didn’t know how she was supposed to answer questions about her father, explain why her family wasn’t like that of the other children and understand the complexity of the accident. It was the unknown that haunted her the most.

“At that age, I couldn’t understand what my father’s death meant,” said Lizotte. “I was too young to even stay awake through the whole funeral because it cut into my normal naptime schedule. I wish I had just one memory of him, but all I have are the memories I’ve formed from the stories I grew up hearing. It’s very hard to look at a picture and know the man in it is my father but be unable to think of a memory that’s unique to the person staring back at me.”

When she was nearing the end of high school and preparing for college, it was Vicki McElwaine, MoDOT executive assistant, who told her about The Foundation’s Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship.

“It’s so important for the spouses and children of our nation’s roadway workers to know they have the support of the roadway safety industry, including the departments of transportation, in helping them when there are tragedies,” said McElwaine. “MoDOT wanted to make sure Brionna knew about The Foundation’s scholarship program and the financial aid available to her. She’s deserving of the scholarship and its benefits in reaching her goals.”

McElwaine said she and the staff try to go the extra mile and provide scholarship information to dependents of roadway workers who contact MoDOT. She said receiving a scholarship often means the world to them and, possibly, the difference between attending college or not.

Lizotte said she can only hope she’s doing what her father would’ve wanted her to do.

“This scholarship helps to answer that question,” she said “While he can’t be here to support me in person, I’ll always know that he’s never truly left me. I believe the scholarship is like ‘pennies from heaven’ and his way of reassuring me he hasn’t left.”

Between attending classes and studying, Lizotte finds time to volunteer at Citizens Against Domestic Violence, a domestic violence shelter. She spends time with children while their mothers attend group therapy and has become a friend and mentor, giving them a sense of safety. For children who stay at the shelter, it’s a comfort to them to know Lizotte is there every Tuesday and sometimes during special occasions.

Lizotte was on the board of directors as student advisor for the Lake of the Ozarks Stop Human Trafficking Coalition before she moved to college. Like most teenagers, she likes to spend time with her friends, even involving them in her volunteer activities.

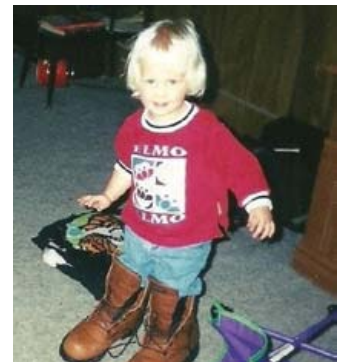
“I’ll be forever grateful to The Foundation for allowing others like myself to be reassured there’s still someone here to look out for us even though the parent no longer is,” she said. ●



Brionna Lizotte, who attends Truman State University in Missouri, received a 2016 Foundation Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship. Lizotte’s father was killed while transporting materials from a worksite for his job with the Missouri Department of Transportation when he was hit by a vehicle.



Gerald and Joyce Lizotte dote on their baby girl, Brionna, at home in Missouri.



Two-year-old Brionna Lizotte has big shoes to fill. She makes her way around the family living room in a pair of her dad’s work boots.

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