

‘He always pushed me to do better’

2017 Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship recipient
inspired by father’s life, giving nature



In May, The Foundation awarded one of its 2017 Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarships to Caitlyn Rains, of Arkansas, who recently began attending the University of Central Arkansas in August. She along with three other students received the scholarships as dependents of workers, who were killed or permanently disabled in roadway work zone crashes, and to assist in continuing their academic goals.

Her father, James “Bubba” Rains, was struck and killed by a vehicle while working with a nighttime paving crew on an Interstate 55 project in April of 2013.

Rains, 34, was working as a contract mechanic at the time of the incident. The driver, who was under the influence of alcohol, also struck and killed another roadway worker in Rains’ crew, Marshall Turner, 55, after entering the closed-off work zone in Crittenden County, Arkansas.

“I was still in high school when it happened and having to get through that at that time was difficult,” Caitlyn said. “It took time to process everything and I’m still not fully healed from it, but my friends and family helped me be able to start recovering from losing my dad.”

Caitlyn said she and her father were very close—he was her “go-to person” to talk to about anything that was going on in her life and he always pushed her to do better.

Her aunt, Wendy Rains, said it is still rough every day because her brother is not here.

“It will be five years in April since he was killed,” Wendy said. “Caitlin competes in horse shows and she really relied on that after losing her father.”

Wendy said Caitlyn has won four titles since her father’s death and used to say she wished he was there to see her.

“I would tell her, ‘He has seen you, from up above,’” Wendy said. “Overall, she’s doing really well. She plays volleyball. She stays active. It’s really pushed her to do more.”

Caitlyn also will receive an additional scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 for her volunteer work. Scholarship recipients who demonstrate a strong commitment to volunteerism are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship in honor of former ATSSA member Chuck Bailey, who was killed in a tragic highway accident in 2002.

Caitlyn had been involved with her local 4-H club since middle school and provided her with opportunities to be involved with a lot of volunteer work around the community. She also went on a mission trip to Nicaragua during her senior year of high school during spring break.

“Every day we had different activities,” Caitlyn said. “One day we made water filters and installed them in houses. We went to the local schools and read to the children. We visited hospitals and a lot of community buildings to reach out to people who might be in need.”

The mission trip also inspired Caitlyn to reconsider her field of study. She originally planned on studying law and becoming a criminal justice lawyer to honor her father but decided there might be a better way to pay tribute to his life, adding that she is now interested in becoming a neonatologist to help infants.

“That trip made me realize I just want to be able to help people,” Rains said. “My dad was always a giving person and put everyone else before himself. Growing up and watching him live like that made me realize that it’s so important to give back. He inspired me to live the same way.”

Caitlyn said after discovering the scholarship when she was researching different opportunities online, it was easy to apply with some guidance from her aunt Wendy.

“Once I applied and received the scholarship, I was so grateful,” Caitlyn said. “I wasn’t sure how I was going to be able to pay for college. I always spoke to my dad about going to college so when I received the scholarship, it was just an amazing experience.”

Caitlyn said she received the additional \$1,000 by writing about her experiences volunteering locally. She said she was able to use that money for books and other course materials.

Currently, Caitlyn said she is maintaining a 4.0 grade average, enjoying meeting new people, and looking for ways she can become more involved in the surrounding community and on campus. She said she remains driven to do well to honor her father.

“You have to think positively no matter what the situation. For someone to lose someone really important in their life at a young age is never easy,” Caitlyn said. “You have to stay connected with the person you lost and ask what would they want you to do and how would they want you to feel. Would they want to see you succeed in the world? You have to put everything on the line to honor them—to have that closure and peace of mind knowing you did everything you could that would have made them happy if they were here.” ●