

Desire to help others drives scholarship recipient

ATSS Foundation helping college student work toward dentistry dream

By Andrea Russell for ATSSA



Taylor Lew Lingafelter never met her father.

Lewis Lingafelter Jr., 27, was taking retroreflectivity readings for his employer, Applied Research Associates, when he was killed in a work zone crash while working overnight on the Tri-State Tollway in the Chicago suburbs.

The next day Taylor's parents were scheduled for a significant medical appointment.

"Lewis was to come home, and we were to head to my [obstetrician] appointment to listen to Taylor's heartbeat for the first time," Marissa Lingafelter-Born said recently.

Lingafelter-Born—who was then Marissa Lingafelter—was 10 weeks pregnant with Taylor when a tractor-trailer collided with a tollway truck, which in turn struck Lingafelter, ending his life on Dec. 6, 2005.

Knowing the tragedy that had befallen the young couple, the

obstetrician did what she could to bring a measure of comfort.

"My doctor went above and beyond and did an early sonogram to get photos to bury alongside Lewis," Lingafelter-Born said.

Though she never knew him, Taylor has pieced together a picture of her father's personality.

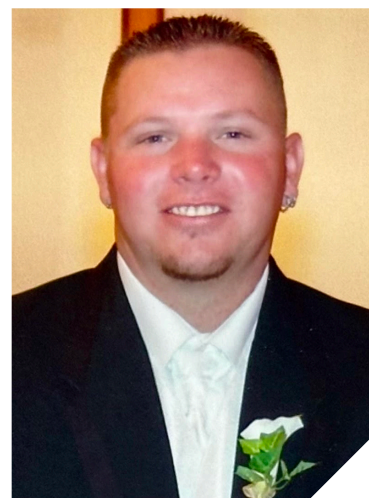
"He was definitely very funny. I know who I got my humor from," she said. "He was a bright person. He was all around just a good guy. He was a good brother-in-law. He was a good son. He treated everybody with kindness."

Lingafelter-Born said Lewis had an infectious smile and would have been an amazing dad.

Taylor's middle name honors her father and helps keep his memory alive.

PRESSING FORWARD

After Lewis Lingafelter's death, it was too painful for his young



bride to return to the apartment they had shared, so she moved into her childhood home with her parents for the remainder of her pregnancy. She stayed there until buying a house in nearby Sullivan, Ill., a few months after Taylor's birth.

The pair's new home was around the corner from Lewis' best friend, Steve Hussong, his wife Ashley, and their children. The Hussongs, Taylor's grandparents, other neighbors, friends and families provided a support network for Taylor and her mother that continues today.

In 2011, Taylor's mother remarried. The family now includes stepfather, Josh Born, and a brother, Teagan Born, now 15 years old. The household has also included cats Chuck, Colie and Carl.

"We have two stoplights in our entire town, and that's it," Taylor said of small-town Sullivan. "It's a very small community and ... everyone around there is pretty nice, very supportive and helpful."

Above Right: Taylor Lew Lingafelter never met her father, Lewis Lingafelter Jr. He was killed in a work zone crash in December 2005 before she was born.

Right: Taylor Lingafelter and her family—stepfather Josh Born, brother Teagan Born and mother Marissa Lingafelter-Born—traveled to Orlando, Fla., in late February for her to speak at the ATSS Foundation's 33rd Annual Golf Classic Tournament. The event helps raise funds for Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship recipients such as Taylor.



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—Marissa Lingafelter-Born

Taylor, who turns 19 in July, just completed her freshman year at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE). She was one of 12 recipients of the Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship awarded by the American Traffic Safety Services Foundation (ATSS Foundation) for the 2024-25 academic year and one of nine recipients for the 2025-26 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.

Taylor also was one of two recipients of the \$1,000 Chuck Bailey Memorial Scholarship for the 2024-25 academic year. That scholarship honors the roadway safety member who died in 2002. It is awarded to students who demonstrate a strong commitment to volunteerism.

CHOOSING HER PATH

Taylor initially considered pursuing a nursing career but instead is working toward a degree in biology and medical science with hopes of becoming a dentist or an oral surgeon. She set her sights on that path after a high school training program

allowed her to shadow and assist employees at both a dental office and a medical clinic.

“I really got to compare what I wanted to do,” Taylor said. “It really made me think that I would want a future in dentistry.”

Her interest in health care also drew her to the American Red Cross. In high school, Taylor chaired a blood drive committee for two years and helped establish a Red Cross Club.

“It was nice getting to meet people from the Red Cross ... and I enjoyed helping them however I could,” Taylor said. “The Red Cross really does help people, and I want to help people.”

She also dedicated time to supporting St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, writing letters to veterans, and assembling care packages for troops.

Taylor excelled academically in high school and participated in several extracurricular activities, including cheerleading and the show choir. She also worked part-time at an ice cream shop.

“I like to stay busy,” she said.

She has maintained her packed schedule at SIUE, where she made the cheer team and joined the Alpha Phi sorority.

“Being in a sorority, there’s just so many things to do,” Taylor said.



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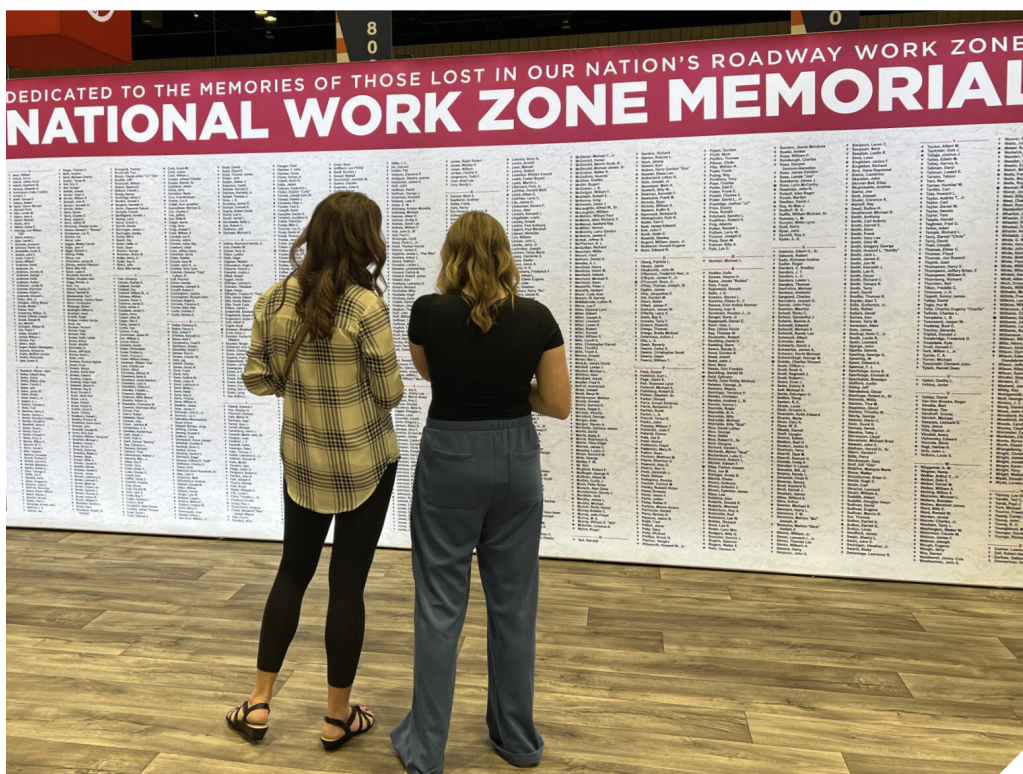
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Taylor Lingafelter and her mother, Marissa Lingafelter-Born, spend a quiet moment looking at the ATSS Foundation's National Work Zone Memorial during the 2025 Convention & Traffic Expo. This was the first time Taylor saw the Memorial, which includes her father's name. Marissa Lingafelter-Born saw the Memorial with her late-husband's name at an ATSSA event in 2018.

"I know there are service hours involved, so I'm excited to be able to figure out where I can help."

She has a part-time job and wants to join the university's biology and pre-dental clubs.

When she's not studying, cheering, working or volunteering, Taylor

likes to go to the gym. And in her rare downtime, she often watches the reality TV series "Dance Moms."

"We love that she chose SIUE as her home to further her education," Lingafelter-Born said. "It felt like home when we visited and every time we visit now, we know this is the perfect fit for her. She is thriving there."

PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND

Taylor was grateful and excited when she found out she was awarded a Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship.

The scholarship is "a big reason why I am where I am and I'm very thankful for that," she said.

"If it wasn't for this program and the assistance it provides her, she may not have been able to go after her dream of becoming a dentist," her mother said. "I

love all the truly caring and supportive people this Foundation has brought into her life."

Taylor noted the ATSS Foundation not only promotes roadway safety but also provides a vital support network for affected families.

"I feel like it also builds a community, because all these applicants get to share their story. It's nice to know that you can tell your story and somebody will understand," she said.

The loss of her father profoundly affected her life and family, but Taylor said it also has had a positive influence on her driving habits.

"I always drive the speed limit, and I pay a lot of attention, because I know that's what my dad would want and, obviously, because it's the law," she said. "I definitely do think about it more than somebody who hasn't been in my shoes would."

Taylor said driver education programs should place greater emphasis on work zone safety.

"The 16-year-olds are the ones that are the new set of drivers in our world, and they need to be especially aware," she said.

That is why the ATSS Foundation has partnered with Work Zone Safe to create and offer a free online teen driver program that addresses how to safely navigate work zones.

Advocating for roadway safety is important to Taylor and her family.

"Today, those around us know the importance of work zone safety," her mother said. "We still speak about it, tell our story, share Lewis' name and preach the importance of being alert in work zones." //

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—Taylor Lingafelter

SHOWING SUPPORT

ATSS Foundation fundraisers support programs that benefit families affected by work zone tragedy

Taylor Lingafelter attended ATSSA's 2025 Convention & Traffic Expo to express her gratitude to everyone at the ATSS Foundation who supported her as she launched her goal of becoming a dentist.

She received a Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship and Chuck Bailey Scholarship from the Foundation for her freshman year, which she recently completed at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

"I want to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for the support, whether it be through donating to the scholarship or just by reaching out and checking in on me as I [began] my college career," she told golfers assembled for the 33rd Annual Golf Classic Tournament held at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate on Feb. 28.

The golf event is one of two main fundraisers of the year for the ATSS Foundation. The other is the annual Sporting Clays Event, which this year held its 12th contest. Both are held in conjunction with the Annual Convention & Traffic Expo and both were sold out this year.

The competitive scholarships are awarded annually to dependents of roadway workers killed or permanently disabled in a work zone crash. Taylor's father, Lewis Lingafelter Jr., was killed in a work zone crash in December 2005, before she was born.

"While I never got to meet him, the driver of the [Illinois Department of Transportation] truck told my mom how he had a conversation with my dad just before starting the job that evening. He mentioned all my dad wanted



A golfer reaches out to Taylor Lingafelter with compassion after hearing her speech.

was to be kept safe so he could get home to his new wife and baby that was on the way, flashing the biggest grin this gentleman had ever seen across someone's face," Taylor told the golfers.

She shared that "overcoming death and doubts has been at the forefront of my journey through this thing called life." She wondered if she could make something of herself, if she could overcome her anxieties to leave home for college, if there was any way she could afford eight years of college, which would be needed to achieve her career goal.

But the ATSS Foundation's support gave her courage.

"With the American Traffic Safety Services Foundation and the Chuck Bailey scholarships, I will be able to work past the doubts and follow my dreams," she said. "I honestly don't know where I would be in my academic life right now if it weren't for these scholarships."



A sold-out crowd heads out to begin the 33rd Annual Golf Classic Tournament held at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate on Feb. 28.