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For immediate release

Scholarship recipient hopes to couple passion for law enforcement, nature

Josephine (Josey) Homeier's appreciation for the out-of-doors is so strong that she plans to make protecting it a career.

She's a hunter, fisher and lover of nature. But if not for her father's later-in-life career change and some neighbors, Homeier might never have considered coupling her affinity for the natural world with law enforcement.

But that's just what Homeier, a 2023 Medford High School graduate who lives on the county's east side, plans to do when she completes her associate's degree from Rasmussen University next month.

And even though Homeier, who was enrolled in Post Secondary Education Options (PSEO) while in high school, started college with about 30 credits, she still has some college loans she wants paid off. A \$2,000 Minnesota Sheriffs' Association Law Enforcement Scholarship presented Monday by Rice County Sheriff Jesse Thomas will help pay off that debt, she said.

Homeier was one of 18 scholarship recipients.

Scholarships are available to students currently enrolled in a Peace Officer Standards & Training (POST) Skills program, in their second year of a two-year law enforcement program, or their third or fourth year of a four-year college criminal justice program.

Recipients must also have completed at least one year of the two-year program or two years of a four-year program.

Homeier said she began thinking about going into law enforcement in middle school after her father, Brian Homeier, now a Kenyon Police officer, got into the field. Her focus shifted a bit after becoming acquainted with neighbors, one a state trooper, the other a conservation officer.

Conservation officer hit the sweet spot for Homeier, who turns 19 in May.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, conservation officers connect "people to the outdoors, and conserve and enhance Minnesota's natural resources by providing outreach, safety training and law enforcement. ...Its role in protecting natural resources has grown from traditional game and fish enforcement to broader natural resource protection responsibilities that affect natural systems, quality of life and economic sustainability...."



Josephine (Josey) Homeier, left, accepts a \$2,000 scholarship check from Rice County Sheriff Jesse Thomas. (Rice County photo)

In addition to her studies at Rasmussen, she works at Big Woods State Parks, which she hopes smooths her path to DNR conservation officer.

Homeier sees the work of conservation officers as helping ensure the state's flora, fauna and beauty is preserved for generations to come.

"If no one is there to help enforce the laws and regulations, we're not going to have the ability enjoy what Minnesota has to offer," she said.

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HOW TO APPLY

Minnesota Sheriffs' Association Law Enforcement Scholarships are available annually. Details are typically released in late September with a mid-November application deadline.

Watch the Rice County Sheriff's Office Facebook page for details.