



MORTON

UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

MORTON HIGH SENIOR TORI LARRABEE ACHIEVES RARE DISTINCTION

Graduating from high school and community college simultaneously while working three jobs, participating in several extracurricular activities, and enduring the COVID-19 pandemic sure makes for a graduation to remember. Make that two.

Morton High School senior Tori Larrabee graduated this May with a high school diploma and her associate's degree from Illinois Central College (ICC) through the Strong Start Program. Tori's hard work and perseverance led her to accomplish the dual graduation, a feat few students achieve.



MHS Senior Tori Larrabee

At the beginning of Tori's senior year in high school, she had already accumulated 23 credit hours at ICC by taking dual-credit courses her junior year and by taking classes over the summer.

"The rigor at MHS was similar to that at ICC," said Tori. "This made it easier to transition from high school to college. I decided I would try to get my associate's since I was already close to having my freshman year at ICC finished."

This was no cakewalk, as Tori took 17 credit hours at ICC while completing the coursework required to graduate high school. Planning her schedule between the two schools required a lot of assistance and guidance.



“With my dad’s, MHS counselors’, and ICC advisors’ help, I was able to situate everything,” said Tori. “Mrs. Christina Kienitz, my high school counselor, helped me figure out which classes to take at the high school and which to take at ICC. She also supported me when I was going through personal issues or was stressed out. I would not be where I am without her endless support, comfort and guidance.”

“My father was the most supportive person in helping me achieve dual graduation,” said Tori. “He would always tell me how proud he was of me and build up my confidence until I was confident in myself. My dad has always been there for me and I could never thank him enough for everything he has done.”

As if the classroom demands placed upon Tori at ICC and at MHS weren’t enough, she also was a full participant in student life at Morton High School (MHS), engaging in 11 extracurricular activities, clubs and sports. She also held three jobs and still made time to work on her studies. She made high honor at MHS and received the Rotary scholarship.

“Tori is an overcomer, a model of strength and dignity,” said Mrs. Kienitz. “The dual diplomas are one of many other high school experiences in which Tori participated. She immersed herself in all that high school has to offer, and those experiences resulted in a well-rounded, mature young woman.”

Tori’s favorite high school memories revolve around her time as a member of the band. She credits the band for helping her develop leadership and mentorship skills, while instilling confidence and trust in her abilities.

Morton Junior High (MJHS) Band Director Katrina Fitzpatrick has known Tori since the 6th grade. Tori and Mrs. Fitzpatrick worked countless hours in MJHS Jazz Band rehearsals, MHS Marching Band practice, and camps such as the Bradley Band Camp and the Music for All Summer Camp.



“What impresses me so much about Tori is her compassion for her fellow students and family,” said Mrs. Fitzpatrick. “She was a leader in the marching band. It was important to her that everyone felt valued and significant in the band. As a result, the younger members performed at a higher level.”



Tori and her dad

Tori's dad, Terry Larrabee, shared his thoughts on his daughter's success. "This is an amazing accomplishment for an 18-year-old young woman," he said. "I believe only a few could accomplish this. High school and college are two diverse environments. Managing to exist in both environments is extremely difficult and takes dedication to make it happen successfully."

From the first day of school, Tori always wanted to catch up to her sister academically. The race continues today, since both daughters will be transferring to Illinois State University as juniors in the Fall."

Rest assured, Tori won't be leaving her extraordinary drive and ambition back in Morton. She already has her sights set on medical school and a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon following her future graduation from ISU.

