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Valley student beats the odds

By Sarah Ingle

Megan Bowie, a 16-year-old graduating senior at Loudoun Valley High School, said she began planning an early high school graduation back in middle school so she could leave her unhappy home life a year early.

"School was definitely my way out," Bowie said.

Now, Bowie's courage in surmounting her life's obstacles and in choosing hard work as a "way out" of her problems have earned her a scholarship that will help her continue her education.

As she prepares to graduate from the fourth high school she has attended in three years, Bowie said her award from the Loudoun chapter of "Beat the Odds" will help her afford her first year at Hampton University. "Beat the Odds" is a national charity that rewards teens, like Bowie, who overcome significant obstacles and succeed in school despite the odds against them.

"I have seldom had a transfer student adapt so quickly to a new situation and not only fit in but change the whole school to make it better," said Keegan Barr, Bowie's guidance counselor.

According to Barr, Bowie is a good student, but what really makes her stand out is her positive, mature attitude.

"I want to tell you, this is one determined lady," Barr said. "She didn't care about the odds. She just made her own."

Bowie moved to Loudoun to live with her aunt during her senior year after being removed from her home because of an abusive father.

Being a biracial student in a school with a predominately white student body only added to the discomfort of getting used to a new school and a new family all at once, Bowie said, adding that she was shocked when one of her classmates used a racial slur to refer to her. "I thought that kind of stuff only happened in movies," she said.

In addition to her problems at home and in school, Bowie had to deal with the symptoms of juvenile arthritis, which forced her to quit running track and to take up to 22 pills per day, she said.

Despite all the obstacles she faced in her personal life, Bowie became an active force at her new school, Barr said. For example, she formed a hip-hop dance troupe, led its practices and choreographed the routines it performed at a pep rally in front of the entire school.

Academically, Bowie accomplished her goal of early graduation by taking an unusually heavy load of core courses, including two math and two science courses her freshman year and an English course over the summer.

Bowie's maturity and determination were especially evident in her proactive approach to looking for scholarships, Barr said. Aware that she could not afford college without help, Bowie came to his office nearly every day to make sure that her scholarship applications were in order.

Bowie said she hopes to study Chinese and international relations in college and ultimately work for the CIA.

"I want to do a lot of things," she said. "I think that since I've been through all this, I can pretty much do anything."



Loudoun Valley High School senior Megan Bowie, of Lovettsville, will receive the Beat the Odds Award May 26 at the Loudoun County Courthouse in Leesburg.

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