



Inspiring Grads: Far from trivial pursuits

St. Mary's senior's wide-ranging intellect reflects an adventuresome spirit

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May 28, 2014

By **Teresa Thomas**
Mail Tribune

Cody Holliday won't be pigeonholed.

While the St. Mary's High School senior may say he's just being "anti-mainstream," it's his willingness to try new things that makes him a favorite among the student body.

"A lot of students get caught up in the pretenses of high school, but Cody breaks away from that and (his peers) admire him for it," said Jim Meyer, who oversees the ninth through 12th grades at the secondary school.

While maintaining a 3.96 GPA, Holliday has hiked Mount Thielsen and gone caving, snowboarding and kayaking with the school's Outdoor Club. Also part of the Astronomy Club, he's toured NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif.; and, in January, presented on the evolution of red giants at the American Astronomical Society Convention in Washington D.C.

Twice a week, he mentors Daniel, a first-grader at VIBES Public Charter School, and on the weekends he enjoys watching "intellectual" movies, such as "Primer," and playing video games and board games. He's also proficient on multiple instruments — including guitar, bass and upright bass — and has his black belt in taekwondo.

"He loves all aspects of life," said his mom, Therese Holliday.

"He loves music. He loves science. He's creative and intuitive."

However, for an 18-year-old who just got his driver's license, Holliday has his priorities straight.

Last weekend, for instance, before catching up with his friends, he finished his calculus assignment and took a Chinese language test.

Holliday wasn't always so adventurous, according to his mom.

"When he was younger, he was a little reserved and like to stay inside and work on his computers," she said.

Before mother and son moved from Olympia, Wash., to Southern Oregon in 2010, Holliday accompanied his eighth-grade class on a bike ride around the San Juan Islands.

"That sparked my interest in doing other things, and then I had the opportunity to do those things at St. Mary's," he said.

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When he was just 6 years old, Holliday was on the way to a dentist appointment with his dad and older brother when their car was hit by a tractor truck.

"My side of the car was the only side untouched," he said. "The car spun, and I remember looking around. It was smoky. I tried to open the door. It was stuck so I climbed in the back, and they broke the window and pulled me out. I walked across glass and a woman in a minivan calmed me down."

His dad and brother both died in the accident. At first, Holliday never wanted to talk about the horrific scene, his mother said.

He met with a child psychologist and, for three years, attended a grief support group for kids while trying to move on with his life.

"I try to keep busy with work and do the best I can, if that doesn't sound too cheesy," he said.

After graduating June 6, Holliday will have one last hoorah with his friends — a road trip to Canada — before moving to Corvallis to attend Oregon State University, where he plans to double major in computer science and electrical engineering. He said he'd also like to go to either the University of Washington or Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his master's degree.

He hasn't decided what career he'll pursue, but he's interested in software development and would "love to work for NASA" or create video games.

"But I'm going for a computer science degree to keep my options open," he said.

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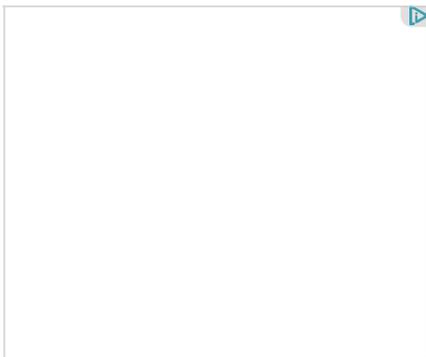
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