

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Colleen McCracken inspires others with intensive music repertoire

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Students from the **Edwardsville School District 7** showcase their talents and determination each day in schools all around the area.

For **Liberty Middle School** student **Colleen McCracken**, her passion for playing the flute has opened the door for a number of opportunities on an international level.

Daughter of **John and Stacey McCracken**, Colleen has created quite a repertoire of experience for being just an eighth grader. She has served in the **ILMEA All District Junior Band** for three years, showcased her talents in this year's inaugural **All-Illinois Junior Band**, performed with the **Madison County Honor Band** for five years and took second place in the **ILMEA State Composition Contest** within her junior high – solo instrument class.

Above all, McCracken had the opportunity to audition for the **Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall in New York City**. She was selected as **first-runner up** in the competition.

“My biggest accomplishment is being selected as first runner-up for the Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall,” McCracken said. “It was my first time auditioning at a national level.”

Edwardsville School District 7 has been incredibly supportive of Colleen's and all of their other students' talents.

“I like that the arts are encouraged and supported,” McCracken said. “The music directors are great and there are many opportunities for involvement.”

For McCracken, working with **Dr. Shelly Monier** for almost five years has allowed her to grow as a musician.

“She inspires me because she has given me many opportunities to see performances and participate in master classes,” McCracken said. “She always challenges me with higher levels of music. She made me the musician I am today.”

McCracken's hopes for reaching Carnegie Hall again are still in her goals for the future.

“I plan to continue working hard in hopes of making the Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall,” she said. “I'm not sure of a career path, but I am looking forward to being a member of the EHS band next year.”

McCracken also hopes to inspire other students to pursue their passions in music and set a good example for other musicians.

“I worked with elementary flutists at the **Edwardsville District 7 Summer Band Camp**,” she said. “I try to set a good example by practicing regularly and coming to rehearsals prepared to play.”

When she is not performing music, McCracken is also an active member in the **Girl Scouts**, having earned **The Silver Award**, the highest award for middle school-aged Girl Scouts.