

Scholarship honors the memory of Grace Skief

June 7 2017 1:10 PM



WOOD RIVER - Riverbend Family Ministries (RFM) board members presented this year's winners for the *Grace Skief Memorial Volunteer Scholarship*. Both recipients

graduated on the National Honor Society list, Lauren Robinson graduated from East Alton-Wood River High School and Elizabeth Hanke graduated from Alton High School.

The scholarship is named after 11 year-old, Grace Skief, who was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (D.I.P.G.), a type of cancer that attacks the brain stem. She was diagnosed in April 2015 and lost her battle just a few months later in July. Skief and her family attended RFM's Annual Trivia Fundraiser and she would volunteer as a "runner," collecting everyone's answer sheets.

"Her smile could light up an entire room," said RFM Executive Director, Tammy Iskarous. "Gracie's time on earth was precious, she touched many lives and knew the importance of volunteering and giving back in the community and that's what made me realize we had to do something in her honor."

Iskarous says that's what makes this scholarship unique, it targets students who exemplify the importance of community service and helps Grace's story live on.

The scholarship recipients both plan on attending Lewis & Clark Community College in the fall and will be able to put the \$500 *Grace Skief Memorial Volunteer Scholarship* money towards their college tuition. Robinson's passion is with little children and plans on studying Early Childhood Education and wants to become a kindergarten teacher. Hanke plans on becoming a nurse practitioner and is enrolling in the nursing program.

The recipients were selected by Grace's parents, Kim and Brett Skief, former RFM board president and Grace's uncle, Jim Folsom and RFM Executive Director, Iskarous.

"We looked for applicants who believed in the volunteer spirit and who did more in the community than just fulfill school requirements," said Iskarous. "Her spirit of loving people and life continues through the recipients."

Her family continues to raise awareness for D.I.P.G. and started, Grace's Gift. They raise money to offer financial assistance to families with children with pediatric brain cancer and D.I.P.G. that seek uncovered or alternative treatment options in the form of non-income based grants.

"In the words of our Grace, while fighting D.I.P.G. at the age of eleven and already understanding the value of life; she would always say, 'life is too short, you gotta get to the point,'" said Grace's mom, Kim Skief. "We at Grace's Gift strive to do just that, by loving others the way that she would have with her actions of creativity, passion and generosity to beat brain cancer in kids, especially D.I.P.G."

The family encourages anyone who's interested in learning more, or to become more inspired by Grace's story, visit www.Gracelovestogive.org. For more information on D.I. P.G. you can go to www.DefeatDIPG.org.