

Taylor Freer of Alton High School is Honored as a Student of the Month for April

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ALTON/GODFREY - Taylor Freer of Alton High School was honored as one of the Students of the Month for April at a regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Alton-Godfrey at Gentelin's Restaurant.

Taylor Freer is a senior at Alton High School. Her whole life, she has strived to be the best student she could possibly be. She knew that, wanting to go into the medical field,

would require her to push herself academically. From a young age, her parents have instilled in her to be a strong, independent, hard-working young woman. She is currently ranked 8th in her graduating class with a 4.64 GPA. She is a proud member of Alton High's National Honors Society. She is also a part of Mu Alpha Theta, which is a high honor mathematics honor society.

Because of her high academic standards, Taylor was selected to be a Junior Marshal for Alton's 2021 graduation ceremony. This past fall, she was awarded the Illinois State Scholar Award because of her high class rank. She has been able to balance all of her honors and AP courses with being a dual sports athlete and 3 year varsity letterman for Alton's volleyball team and a 4 year varsity letterman for Alton's soccer team. In these sports, she was nominated captain for both teams by her fellow teammates and coaches.

For volleyball, she was given the Most Valuable Player or MVP award for this past season. She was also given the varsity volleyball Scholar Athlete Award for both the 2020 and 2021 seasons. She was given this award because she had the highest GPA on the team. Taylor was also given the varsity Soccer Scholar Athlete Award at the end of the 2021 soccer season. During this past volleyball season, she was also deemed September's Student Athlete of the Month.

My whole high school career, she had dreamed of becoming a Red Bird Nest Leader. Her senior year, Taylor became a Nest Leader with 5 other of her good friends. This was one of the highlights of her senior year because not only did it get her more involved within her school, Taylor also got to lead cheers at all of the sporting events and influence others to take just as much pride in Redbird Nation as she does.

Because of her love for biology and her future career path, she has decided to reach out and ensure this is what she wants to do in life. The summer of 2019, she shadowed a cardiologist and got to watch various procedures and patient consultations. That same summer, Taylor volunteered at Alton Memorial in the Radiology Department. There, She cleaned rooms, filed paperwork, and got the chance to watch a few ultrasounds. Taylor was selected to be in the Congress of Future Medical Leaders and attended via zoom in November of 2021. She got the chance to meet Ivy league deans, Nobel Prize Winners, and watch narrated surgeries. With Covid, Taylor had to get creative, continuing to get medical experience. She shadowed via video physicians such as Dermatologists, family physicians, Anesthesiologists, and many more. The best opportunity she has been given so far is being a lab technician at Washington University St. Louis School of Medicine. She had the opportunity to work in Christina Strong's lab where they studied the epidermis of the skin.

Before she entered her freshman year of high school, she was involved within our community, in fact, before she was even in first grade. When she was five years old, she

went to her grandma with a piggy bank. She said to her that she wanted to raise money for those less fortunate than her, starting off with the coins in her bank. Her grandma helped Taylor and her sister start their own fundraiser, Christmas in July, which helps raise money to buy toys for United Way's Community Christmas. This charity was her late Uncle David's favorite, which makes this event so much more meaningful because he was like her second dad. So far, the pair have raised over \$500,000 for Community Christmas. Her family has also helped her start another fundraiser called Cookies and Cocoa, which also helps raise money and toys for Community Christmas in early December. Her whole life, she remembers ringing bells for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign. This past year, Taylor and her sister co-chaired the Salvation Army's Tree of Lights Campaign. She got the opportunity to organize the bell ringing as well as encouraging people to help our local community by ringing the bells. They exceeded their goal and raised over \$113,000 for the Salvation Army. And she'd like to thank the Rotary for helping them achieve their goals!

Her whole life, Taylor's calling has been to help others. She plans to make it her life's goal. She hopes to someday become a physician to not only help those in a medical sense, but also in a holistic way as well. She is now deciding between attending Baylor University Miami or Ohio University in the fall and plans to major in Biology on the pre-med track. Thank you Mrs. Laaker for making her suffer through her 1st hour freshmen year Bio H class. Turns out, Taylor loves Bio!