

Mother Nova, Plays Instrumental Role: Samara Helton, An EHS Senior, Is AMH Health Equity Scholarship Recipient

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ALTON - Samara Helton, a senior at Edwardsville High School, is one of Alton Memorial Hospital's first two Health Equity Scholarships winners. Samara was raised by a single mother who has been a steady influence in her life. Taryn Wallace, an Alton High School senior, is the other to receive a scholarship and there is a separate feature on Riverbender.com about her.

Samara's mother, Nova, had Samara when she was 18 years old, and Samara said that her mom sacrificed a lot of her personal goals for her children.

"She worked so hard to make sure we had everything we would need," Samara said. "When her classmates were packing up to move to college, my mother was changing my diapers. I work very hard to make sure that she knows that my hard work is not only for me but for her as well to show how far her sacrifice has come. In a way, her having me so young has become my biggest drive to become the most successful person I can be to show her what she could have been."

Samara has five siblings ranging in age from 16 to 4 – Nicholas, Joslyn, Hayleigh, Ronin and Lucy - and another one is on the way in June.

"My siblings are also a big part of my drive to make sure I can be the best role model for them as possible," Samara said.

Samara attended Civic Memorial High School in Bethalto during her first three years of high school and will graduate from EHS later this month. She will be attending the University of Tampa this fall to study Biology on a Pre-Med track.

"I plan on pursuing a career in the dermatology field," she said. "Dermatology visits are not always covered by insurance and doctor visits can be quite costly. It will be my responsibility to have payment plans available for people of all incomes to get the treatments they need and deserve."

Samara's interest in dermatology also came from watching "Dr. Pimple Popper" on YouTube and later on the Lifetime channel. Dr. Sandra Lee is the California dermatologist featured in the programs.

"I watched that YouTube channel growing up and it was my favorite," Samara said. "I'm someone who loves to put smiles on people's faces, and if I can make that happen by being their dermatologist, then I'm going to make that happen. People often struggle with their image due to acne or some physical imperfection. Being a dermatologist would mean helping to remove insecurities."

Recipients will be asked to consider employment at Alton Memorial Hospital during and upon completion of their degree or certification. Annual renewal will be based on documentation of progress toward completion of the program and a minimum 2.5-grade point average.

