

2015 Graduate Profile: Full scholarship winner appreciates extracurricular learning at Cristo Rey



By Erik Zygmunt

ezygmunt@CatholicReview.org

Twitter @ReviewErik

Like her fellow 2015 graduates of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Taylor Luallen is one step closer to adulthood and its attendant worries. Student loan debt, however, won't be one of them.

Luallen was chosen from high school seniors in the 28-school Cristo Rey Network to receive a full, four-year scholarship to Stevenson University. She plans to put the opportunity to good use.

"I love helping people, but I also love science," Luallen said, "and I figured nursing was the best way to put those two together."

The realization came first-hand, during Luallen's experience in the neonatal intensive care unit at Mercy Medical Center. The hospital was the site of her corporate internship – all Cristo Rey students intern at local businesses to help fund their educations while supplementing their classroom learning with real-world work experience.

Luallen's work at Mercy also helped her understand the different roles within the medical field.

"I wanted to be a doctor when I was younger, and then I realized that nurses have

more of a connection with patients," she said.

Though she is looking forward to her next four years at Stevenson, Luallen said she will miss the "sense of community" at Cristo Rey.

"The teachers here really care," she said. "At some schools, they give you work and that's it. Here, the teachers become your family, and the students become your family. Everybody has your back."

Luallen is grateful for the lessons she learned outside of books, including at the school's Kairos retreat, an experience named for the Greek word for a certain type of time - an appointed time, or God's time.

Jesuit Father John Swope, Cristo Rey's outgoing president, described the retreat as "your moment to grow and become more committed to Jesus Christ."

"I feel it was one of the best experiences ever," Luallen said. "They took us way out of our comfort zones."

Consequently, she said, she has taken to writing as a means of self-reflection.

"Kairos really brought out a lot of things," she said.

Luallen is also grateful for a women's life-skills class she took her sophomore year.

"It exposed you to the real-world situations you'll have to deal with when you get out of school, because life is about more than reading books," she said. "My freshman year, I was in my little shell, all about the books. Now I'm more of a well-rounded person."

Not that she ever neglected "the books" - Luallen has maintained a 3.6 GPA or higher all four years, she said, has been part of the National Honor Society and was named a 2015 Archdiocese of Baltimore Distinctive Scholar.

And she has always been a reader. William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is one of her favorites.

"I could write you two papers about that play," she said.

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