

Cumberland-native relishes Archbishop O'Brien scholarship

Like any parent, Stuart Czapski always felt his daughter, Ann, was special.

He saw the eldest of his four children as a kind person devoted to her faith and community who also excelled in the classroom.

His instincts were correct.

Ann received a letter in the mail saying she was the 2008 recipient of the Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien Scholarship from Emmitsburg's Mount St. Mary's University. As the-then Bishop Walsh School senior read the notification, Mr. Czapski and his wife, Beth, erupted in celebration. The \$15,000 per year scholarship is given once a year to a potential Mount St. Mary's student from Archdiocese of Baltimore schools.

"I couldn't believe it at first," Ms. Czapski recalled. "My mom was freaking out, saying 'Oh my gosh, Oh my gosh!'"

It was a moment of pure exhilaration for Ann and her family.

"It was one of those things where you're extremely honored because it's limited to one person," Mr. Czapski said. "She works hard, and you see that and you're proud of that as a parent, but when she's recognized outside of the school and outside of the community, it means that much more."

Nobody was more surprised than Ms. Czapski. A Bishop Walsh student had claimed the scholarship the year before. What were the odds, she thought, of another Western Maryland student standing out among the large pack of archdiocesan academic stars?

"There are so many people, and we're just a tiny school," she said.

The scholarship winner must be an example of the ideals set forth by the Mount in its four pillars: faith, discovery, leadership and community. To qualify, a student must have a 3.0 GPA, 1100 SAT score and submit a 500-word essay.

Mount President Thomas H. Powell said in a statement: "This distinctive scholarship initiative reaffirms the historical bond between the Mount and the church, and highlights the importance of Catholic students making a difference in their parishes, their dioceses and their communities."

As a student of Bishop Walsh, Ann boasted a 4.12 grade point average and was a member of the youth group at her Cumberland parish, Ss. Peter and Paul. She also regularly volunteered at a local soup kitchen. The experience of preparing and serving meals was eye-opening for the captain of Bishop Walsh's soccer team.

"I never realized how many people in Cumberland don't have food," she said.

She has taken that experience with her to the Mount this year, where she is wrapping up her first semester. She hopes to become a math teacher because of her lifelong love of the subject and a desire "to be a leader."

When the Czapskis took their somewhat shy daughter to school this past August, they encouraged her to embrace the college experience while representing the scholarship well.

"When things are given to some people, they don't value it," Mr. Czapski said. "She knows this is very prestigious. She's not doing it to get the recognition. She's always been one to follow the teachings of the church."

The Mount is accepting applications for the 2009 Bishop's Scholarship. Deadline is Feb. 1. Information is available at www.msmary.edu/bishop.