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Teen of the Week: Lauren Morrell

WENDI WINTERS, For The Capital
 Published 12/10/10

In a dreary, winter day, 16-year-old Lauren Morrell brightens up the room. "I love everything," she said. "I'm really optimistic, enthusiastic and energetic."



Wendi Winters - For The Capital

The Severn School Upper School junior Lauren Morrell helps clean up the Severn River and, in January, will be involved in a reef restoration project in Borneo, Malaysia.

The Severn School junior's sunny outlook isn't dimmed by the condition of the environment around her. Instead, she's working hard to make the world a better place. She thinks globally and acts locally as president of the school's Eco Club.

"We're trying to set up a petition against the plastic clam shell and Styrofoam containers used in the school's cafeteria," she said. "We've also been placing recycling bins around Severn School." The small club also plans one-day Awareness Programs for the school.

The Severn School overlooks the Severn River. Occasionally Lauren will use her family's boat to sail to school, instead of having a parent drop her off. She cares about the health of her liquid playground; Lauren interns with the Severn River Riverkeeper organization.

Fred Kelly, an environmental attorney and the Severn Riverkeeper, calls her a natural leader.

He lauded her for her perceptiveness "as to what will make a difference in protecting and restoring her river, the Severn River, and the bay, not the endless studies that government continues to waste money on, but in-the-ground restoration projects that actually

stop pollution."

Lauren volunteers to create living shorelines in communities along the river to help prevent storm runoff and improve the shoreline's natural filtration. Working creek by creek, volunteers are currently finishing projects on Clements Creek.

During the summer months this year, Lauren headed out in a boat on Wednesdays to monitor the water quality in 20 locations. "We started the monitoring this summer," explained Lauren. "The data gives us the ability to get grants and other applications."

Kelly added, "Lauren is leading the way in taking a bold step to help protect and restore the bay through her actions and not just words."

Consistently on the Headmaster's List, Lauren serves at school as a peer tutor and peer mentor. Two afternoons a week, she tutors a sixth-grader in math and other subjects.

Math Instructor Sharon Garrott feels Lauren has the most positive attitude of any student

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she's taught in her 36 years of teaching.

"She comes to advisory every morning with a huge smile on her face and never utters a negative comment about anything," Garrott said. "She strives for perfection in everything she does both in and out of the classroom."

During her freshman year, Garrott noted, Lauren was already making plans to get into a good college.

"Lauren is an exceptional student, respected by both peers and faculty alike," added Richard Zmuda, her English teacher, and National Honor Society adviser. "An incredible work ethic in the classroom also extends to athletics, where she not only participated on the Severn sailing team but also completed the recent Baltimore Half-Marathon."

In addition to the sailing team, the teen is a member of the school's swim team and also participates with the cross-country team. The past two years, she's run the Baltimore Half-Marathon. The first time, she ran with her mother, Margaret Morrell, a stay-at-home mom and active volunteer. This year, she went with her friend, Natalie Peelish. The two girls tied for seventh place in the 14 to 19 age group.

The other members of Lauren's family include her father, Craig, a principal in the commercial real estate and development firm of KLNb and an owner of Morrell Builders. Her sisters Susan, 14, and Christen, 11, also attend the Severn School.

This semester, Lauren started another school club, the Adventure Club. She plans to warm up members to adventuresome activities in the area beginning with an ice skating outing tomorrow. Other plans include indoor rock climbing and games of laser tag during the wintry months. In the spring, she hopes to organize bike rides, hiking and kayaking trips.

Her quest for adventure is not new. She loves to water and alpine ski, and earned her scuba diving certification during a family trip to the Caribbean.

Another trip took her to Switzerland last year. There, she competed with other teens for the opportunity to sail with explorer Mike Horn on one leg of the four-year Pangaea Expedition, a pan-global adventure. From 2008 through to its conclusion in 2012, about 144 teens will participate in the expedition aboard the *Pangaea* as it sails from the Arctic to the tropics, to Asia, the South Pacific, Africa and Europe.

The boat is an environmental wonder, from its construction and materials to the ability to compost kitchen waste. Its mission is to alert the world to the looming dangers of global warming. The teens involved in the Young Explorer Program are encouraged to "explore, learn and act."

"Her experience in Switzerland last year illustrates Lauren's passion for the environment and the extraordinary leadership skills she possesses," Garrott said.

On her return, Lauren created a PowerPoint lecture about her trip and the goals of the Pangaea Expedition. "Her presentation to the entire Upper School student body and faculty was remarkable, a slideshow and commentary that would rival a professional speaker," added Garrott.

Originally, Lauren hoped to accompany Horn on a mountain-climbing trip to Nepal and Pakistan. When she wasn't able to go, the other 15 teens on the expedition affixed her photo to a puppet, climbed with it to the summit and sent photos to her via their online blog.

For two weeks in mid-January, Lauren won't be in school: She'll be putting her diving experience to good use in Borneo, Malaysia.

As part of the Pangaea Expedition, she will be involved in ecological exploration and restoration activities such as coral reef monitoring, artificial reef planting, and visiting communities and schools with other Young Explorers from Japan, Argentina, Germany, Australia, Poland, Netherlands and South Africa. (For details, visit www.mikehorn.com/en/yep/young-explorers-program.)

Bon Voyage!

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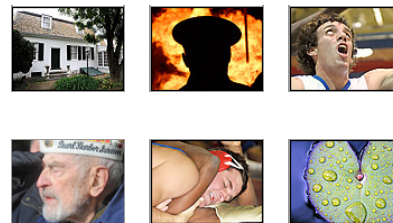


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