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Miranda Livingston, a graduate student in TWU's College of Arts and Sciences, to be honored with Virginia Chandler Dykes Scholarship

Livingston's perseverance, ability to overcome a learning difference discovered in adulthood, and strange twist of fate have enabled her to continue to pursue her educational goals

Dallas, TX – January 20, 2009 – Miranda Livingston, a graduate student and resident of Gainesville with a 4.0 in TWU's College of Arts and Sciences, pursuing a Master of Arts in English degree, will receive one of four prestigious scholarships given by TWU at the Seventh Annual Virginia Chandler Dykes Leadership Award luncheon, presented by Bank of Texas and Bank of Texas Private Bank, Thurs., Feb. 26, at noon, at The Belo Mansion and Pavilion. After completing her masters, she would like to pursue a doctoral degree and hopes to one day teach at the college level. Livingston's scholarship is sponsored by Sis Carr.

Miranda Livingston's journey to this point in her life has been one full of challenges along with unique circumstances. Throughout her education, Livingston struggled in school, barely graduating from high school. She continued her studies at University of North Texas, where she was placed on academic probation and unable to pass a basic math class. The highest level of math she could pass was on a third grade level. She went for testing, and it was discovered she had ADHD along with a math-related learning difference. Once she started taking

medication, working with her doctor, and learning ways to process information differently there was great improvement.

Just before her diagnosis, Livingston went on a vacation with friends to South Padre. Growing up she had never seen a beach and thought it would be a nice getaway from her troubles. She was doing so poorly in school and tuition rates were climbing. Because Livingston was paying her own way, she didn't see how she would be able to continue. On her first day in Padre, there was storm out in the Gulf, and the waves were high. She and her friends stayed in the shallow water all day. A teenager came by and said that his friend had been carried out in the current and couldn't swim. Livingston told her friend to get her phone from her purse and call 911, and she started swimming out to him. Another individual also started going out to help. When they reached the teen he was panicked and they were all caught in the same current. The man assisting her asked her if she had him because he didn't think he could help. She said she did but thought it was the end and prayed for God to be with her mother when they told her what had happened. Livingston grabbed on to the teen and fought her way through the current.

"When I felt sand under my feet, the adrenaline kicked in and I was able to put him on the beach," said Livingston. "I could see the other gentleman was in trouble so I swam back out with some other people to reach him. A wave came up and he went face down. We got him to the beach, where I did CPR until paramedics arrived. He did not make it."

This was a difficult time for Livingston as she took responsibility for what happened. A few months later she was contacted as a candidate to receive the Carnegie Medal for acts of heroism. In December 2005, she was awarded the medal. Along with the medal Livingston had the option of choosing a direction for a financial allotment, and she asked for a college scholarship.

"I received a full academic scholarship," stated Livingston. "Here I had gone from working so hard to pay my way, and now I could send the bill to them. This gave me hope to pursue a graduate degree. I continued to work, but this scholarship covers the bulk of the costs. Even when you don't understand or see the good in something, God still takes care of you. The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission also cares for the family of the man who drowned, who was also honored."

Livingston discovered her niche in the College of Arts and Sciences at TWU, dramatically improving her grades and discovering she had a gift and passion for teaching while working as a teacher of the after school and summer programs at Angel Academy in Gainesville. For the last four years, she has created curriculum, prepared a budget, and hired and trained teachers.

She also currently works as a writing tutor for composition and research at North Central Texas College and is a graduate teaching assistant at TWU with responsibility for two freshmen level composition classes for which she prepares the syllabus and plans lectures. She received her bachelor of arts degree from TWU and began her graduate studies in January 2008.

“I am so humbled to receive the TWU Virginia Chandler Dykes Scholarship for the College of Arts & Sciences this year,” said Livingston. “This is overwhelming for me, and I hope I do my best to represent TWU, this award, and the College of Arts & Sciences. TWU has been a wonderful to me, and I know that there is still so much to learn. I always feel as if others are ahead of me and continue to work hard.”

“I know that my opportunity to go to school was made possible because someone almost lost a life and someone did lose a life, and that is something I don’t take lightly.”

For more information on the TWU’s Seventh Annual Virginia Chandler Dykes Leadership Award Luncheon and to purchase tickets, contact Carolyn Ishee, TWU Executive Director, Institutional Development, 940-898-3869 or cishee@twu.edu.

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