

## Mono Lake Committee Scholarship

My name is Mariah McCullough and I am a senior at Lee Vining High School. I have attended school at Lee Vining since the middle of first grade and I have always loved it here. I believe that Lee Vining is a great place to grow up. A benefit of growing up in such a small, rural area is the blessing of not only being raised by your parents, but also by your community. I know that having constant support from my community members helped me become the young woman I am today. Being able to watch nature evolve over the seasons and years has made me believe that anything can happen, no matter how impossible it may seem. I've seen some pretty amazing stuff happen in Mono Basin that has taught me to never give up and to believe in the incredible. This area has taught me so much about life and I am proud to have grown up here. I love being able to look out the window and see the beauty of this area. The familiarity of the lake comforts me. Anytime I leave Lee Vining, I am always looking forward to the drive back and then whenever we come over Conway and I see the lake, I smile. This is my home.

While in high school, I have played three varsity sports all four years and maintained a high GPA. I have received many awards for both my athletic and academic abilities. I have made sure to make the very best of my high school years and participate in as many activities as I could. I can honestly say that I will never forget all that I have learned here at Lee Vining High and I will always be grateful for graduating from this high school.

For the past four years in softball, we have been tortured by what we believed was a "curse". We play each team 3 times in season and there was this one team every year that always beat us the second time we played them. However, this year, we were determined to go undefeated. So my mom came up with the idea of having some sort of a ceremony to rid us of this supposed curse. The whole team walked down the edge of the lake and touched the water. Then we all stood in a formation that was similar to the places where we stood on the softball field with me in the middle (as pitcher). Then we passed around a small buddha and each said something that was meaningful. Then they gave the miniature buddha to me and I threw it in the lake. This ritual was meant to break the curse; and it did. The next day we beat that team and this softball season we went undefeated, thanks to Mono Lake.

In the fall, I am moving to Caldwell, Idaho. It has a terrain that is almost identical to Mono Basin which is very comforting to me. I will be able to move out of Lee Vining, but still be close to all that is familiar to me. I will be going to the College of Idaho and playing basketball for the varsity women's team. I am going to be majoring in Sociology with a minor in Spanish. I know my college experience is going to be great and I'm looking forward to it. I am looking forward to starting my own life in a different setting. However, I know for a fact that I'm going to miss Lee Vining. I grew up here and it will always be home to me.