

Charlotte Metro Area Relocation Council (CMARC) 2008 Scholarship Application

Background

The Charlotte Metro Area Relocation Council is a non-profit organization that brings together corporations and relocation service providers in and around Charlotte for the primary purpose of providing educational information and current industry updates to its members. As part of our commitment to Relocation, CMARC has developed a scholarship program for current high school seniors who have relocated into the Charlotte area sometime between grades 9 (after 8th grade graduation) and 12. **The one-time award of \$1,000 will be presented to one Charlotte area public high school senior this year.** The award will be sent to the college that the student will be attending to assist with tuition, etc.

CMARC will select scholarship winners based on the strength of their total package. The student will be evaluated on academic performance, extra-curricular activities, and on their response to an essay addressing the challenges associated with relocating to a new area and a new high school.

Applicants must meet these requirements:

- Currently a senior in good standing in a Charlotte area public high school.
- Relocated between grades 9 and 12.
- Relocated more than 50 miles and changed schools due to their family's relocation
- Currently have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a scale of 4.0 (or equivalent achievement on a different scale)

All applications must be postmarked by February 15, 2008 to have time to evaluate them and make a selection. The scholarship will be awarded at our spring meeting in March, 2008.

Please submit the following information along with your completed application directly to Chris Chalk, contact info listed above.

1) Please list (on a separate sheet) all your extra-curricular activities and work experience during high school (after 8th grade).

2) Please write an essay addressing the following:

Tell us about your experiences associated with your relocation into the Charlotte area. Please feel free to discuss your family background, challenges encountered with the relocation, and successes achieved. We would also appreciate any advice you would give to another teenager preparing to relocate (as you did)!

The essay should be between 1,000 to 1,500 words and is preferred in a Word document format.

Thank you for your interest and for participation in this program, and good luck!

If you have any questions, please call Chris Chalk at 770-436-1395 or email cchalk@graebel.com.

For further information about CMARC, please visit the website at www.charlottecmarc.com.

Weathering the Storm: Life after Katrina

“People, people please evacuate, move to higher grounds”, I heard blasting from the television as I packed my overnight bag. It was almost a routine to me, every year the meteorologist threatened that the “Big One” was approaching, hurricane that is. Every year I would pack about three days worth of clothing, necessities and entertainment, and would seek shelter at an evacuation center or hotel. To me, it was time out of school, a vacation and relaxation, so I wasn’t reluctant to pack up for a “surprise vacation”. Unknowingly, I thought that this evacuation was no different than others, as we backed out of our driveway, in route to higher grounds. I never thought that I had slept in my bed for the last time or locked my door that will never be opened again. I never imagined that I had walked down the hallway of my small, parochial, all girls’ school for the last time. This would be the beginning of an end, and the turning point of my shattered life.

We evacuated fifty miles north of New Orleans, to my grandmother’s hometown, Picayune, Mississippi, barely escaping harm’s way. Picayune was a temporary refuge for me, due to overcrowded situations and lack of proper resources such as: food, water and electricity. As a result of the hurricane, oil rigs were destroyed, causing a major shortage of fuel. The price of gas tripled and was rationed out, making it nearly impossible to travel. Gas was rationed out on a first come, first serve basis, causing many to camp outside the pumping stations. After camping outside the pumping stations for a week, we finally had a full tank and a new destination, Charlotte, North Carolina.

On September 9, 2005, we left Picayune, Mississippi around mid-day and arrived in Charlotte before dawn on September 10, 2005. We were invited and welcomed by my aunt and her family; she assured us that by relocating to Charlotte, resources would be more accessible. She brought us to the Charlotte Coliseum to register as Hurricane Katrina victims and for all resources available to us. We researched high schools at the Coliseum and I registered at Independence High school on September 12, 2005.

My first official day of high school, as a sophomore, was September 13, 2005. Enrolling into Independence High school was a huge transition for me. I had to adjust from a population of 300 girls to a co-ed population of nearly 2,600. Some questioned my decision to enroll into school immediately, but I did not want to think about what happened or what was going to happen, I wanted to escape from it all. I used school as my outlet; it let me escape from the harsh reality, pain and the memories. During class, I would often catch myself daydreaming of being in New Orleans with my friends, laughing and talking. While daydreaming, tears would well up in my eyes, but I never let them fall, instead I reminded myself to remain focused. I gave all of my schoolwork 100 percent effort and accepted nothing less than an 'A'. I became very hard on myself, I was extremely disciplined, and I was a perfectionist. For the first time in years, I was on the Honor Roll again, accomplished a goal and saw the result of my handwork.

To me, failure was not an option; I knew that I had to keep my head up. Once again, I had to muster up enough strength to rise above this new obstacle in

my life. "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade", was a saying that I lived by at this point of my life. My father died in May 2003, my mother suffered a stroke in January 2004 and finally Hurricane Katrina tore through my already shattered life in August 2005.

I endured a lot of sleepless nights and lonely days in my family's new apartment. The apartment is located in Eastern Charlotte and was fully furnished by members of Covenant Presbyterian Church. The apartment was another huge transition for me; I lived in a comfortable, ranch-style home in Eastern New Orleans. Now I'm stuffed into a "matchbox", with my memories, thoughts and dreams. I had never lived in an apartment before; I've always lived in a house with a fence, yard and garage. I now stand in line to use the restroom and have to squeeze through tight spaces to sit at the table together for dinner. However, I knew that remaining focused, working hard and having faith; everything was going to be okay.

Now, it has been nearly three years since my relocation to Charlotte, and I don't regret relocating here. In the beginning, I didn't see the brighter picture nor did I understand the lesson from this experience. Now, I understand that obstacles in our lives teaches us as human beings to be stronger, better and wiser. If I hadn't relocated to Charlotte, I honestly don't think I would have had the opportunities that I have now. For example, I had doubts about being accepted into an accredited university. I'm now a senior at Independence High school. I've been on the Honor Roll for the past three years and I hold officer positions in various clubs and organizations. School still is my main focus in life right now,

and it keeps me going. I'm very active in the clubs and organizations, in which I hold office positions such as: Key Club, DECA, National Technical Honor Society and Friendship, Sisterhood and Opportunity.

I am continuing my education next year at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, with hopes of becoming a middle school teacher. I would like to positively touch and influences many young adults in my lifetime. I would like to inspire young adults, like my previous teachers inspired and motivated me during my time of need.

My advice to any individual relocated or relocating is to keep your head up and keep going. Everything happens for a reason, no matter if you understand it now, you will eventually. Even though, I've been through a lot, I wouldn't have it any other way because it made me a stronger person. Without the rain, we wouldn't appreciate the sunshine and without obstacles, we would take life for granted.