



XAVIER

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XAVIER STUDENT RECEIVES \$25,000 LUARD MORSE SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN LONDON

New Orleans LA - By the time Xavier sophomore Serena Newberry – one of four finalists for the prestigious Luard Morse Scholarship – finished telling the award committee about the non-profit organization she started at the age of eight, her academic accomplishments, and her ability to speak Chinese fluently as well as play the piano and flute, they were more than convinced she was deserving of the award.

The scholarship, sponsored by the English-Speaking Union of the United States, provides up to \$25,000 towards a semester of study at an English University. Eligible students include sophomores in any discipline attending UNCF institutions, Hampton and Howard

Universities, or other HBCU's.

"I am super excited," said Newberry. "I am definitely looking forward to the cultural experience and learning different approaches to teaching English."

A native of Detroit MI (the Roeper School), Newberry says she is always on the hunt for scholarships, but was really concentrating on finding opportunities in China when she happened across a random email about the Luard Morse Scholarship. The 18-year-old honor student has been studying Chinese for six years and visited China for two weeks in both 2015 and 2016.

"I wasn't even going to apply at first," she recalled, "but then I thought to myself; 'that's crazy. This could be an awesome experience'."

Newberry plans to study at Goldsmith University of London in the spring of 2018, chosen because of its strong English and education programs. But it was the fact that Goldsmith had a Confucius Institute that really sealed the deal. Not surprisingly, Newberry is a student ambassador for Xavier's own Confucius Institute.

Even with the scholarship, however, Newberry needs an additional \$10,000 to help with flight accommodations, transportation, books, food and incidentals. According to Newberry's mentor, XU education professor Dr. Rachel Davis-Haley, efforts are underway to find funding.

"Serena is pretty focused, she is a self-starter," she said. "She's very driven and she's going to do well. We have to make sure of it."

Newberry's interest in education and her decision to attend Xavier stems from her burning desire to be of service to those less fortunate.

"Service, its super important to me," said Newberry. "Other schools talk about community service, but Xavier spells it out directly in the mission statement."

Her love and passion to help others has developed over time. It began in 2006 when she, along with her mother and older sister, started a non-profit organization called Developing Kingdoms in Different Stages. Her mom, an English teacher at the time, envisioned tackling illiteracy in the Black community head on. Together they created a safe haven for children to learn and develop life skills.

"When we started, we had no money, nothing," said Newberry, recalling how her family trio took to making peanut butter and ham sandwiches because they knew that many of the children would have nothing to eat at home.

"It was tough going there for a while," she said. "But now we've grown so much that we have interns and even a board of directors. It's so nice. "

Newberry credits her mother with influencing her interest in the English language. "When I was younger, I said I would never be a teacher," said Newberry, explaining that her mom employed "a special form of torture" – making her use high school grammar text books while she was in elementary school. "And yet, somehow, today I love it."

Early on, she and her sister made a collective, conscious decision to study Chinese, because they had no interest in other foreign languages. Both continue to study the language that has now become second nature to them.

Newberry satisfies her passion for teaching and service by being active in Xavier's tutoring (Writing Resource Center) and volunteer programs (MAX). Academically she maintains a 3.81 GPA and is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society and Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education.

While Newberry definitely plans to do some teaching when she graduates from Xavier in 2019, she also has her eyes on a law degree. Pre-law is her minor.

"Serena is the kind of student you want; she is serious about education" said Dr. Renee Akbar, Chair of Xavier's Division of Education and Counseling. "I am confident that she will also excel in her professional life, whether she ultimately becomes a teacher or a lawyer, because in her heart she truly just wants what's best for the children and anyone else she has the opportunity to serve."

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