

Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School student and recent grad head to China

by Alex Krokos, Correspondent, *Cleveland Sun News*, Wednesday August 26, 2009



Ben Genco and a teacher from his Chinese summer camp at The Ohio State University

BROADVIEW HEIGHTS -- A Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School sophomore and a 2009 BBHHS graduate were awarded the National Security Language Initiative for Youth scholarship.

As a result the students will live and attend school in China for much of the 2009-10 school year.

Jane-Na Chang, the Mandarin Chinese teacher at BBHHS and Brecksville-Broadview Heights Middle School, relayed the information about the NSLI for Youth scholarship to her high school students.

Seven Chinese I and Chinese II scholars applied for the scholarship and five decided to have the follow-up interview.

All students who apply are offered interviews.

"This is a prestigious program and quite an accomplishment for the BBHHS students," said Chang.

Dana Buzzelli, 18, a 2009 graduate of BBHHS, will participate in the year-long program during her gap year between high school and college.

"When I applied for the program I didn't think I would get it. I was in the middle of college applications and this scholarship just seemed like it would be a dream come true," Buzzelli said.

"My dream is to be an interpreter and Chinese is the language I'm focusing on right now, so to be able to fully immerse myself in the language and the culture was, and still is a really exciting prospect for me."

U.S. State Department Sponsored Program

This study abroad program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, part of the U.S. State Department, to encourage students to study less commonly studied foreign languages. They include Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Korean, Russian and Turkish.

There were 1340 applications for 392 scholarships this year (for all critical languages); 232 for the summer of 2010, 62 for fall, 43 for spring, and 55 for the year-long program.

She added, "I definitely chose to apply and go ahead with the program for the phenomenal language learning opportunity."

Ben Genco, 16, a Sophomore, is taking part in the semester-long program beginning in late January 2010 through June.

"Ben's first year Chinese teacher said something about the scholarship and he decided to apply and won. His father travels and his brother is an international business major and participated in the choir with the University of South Carolina at the inaugural ceremony at the Olympics in China," said Karen Genco, Ben's mom.

"Ben thought the program would be an interesting opportunity."

The scholarship, which is open to all U.S. citizens ages 15-18 with a minimum grade point average of 2.5, covers all expenses; international airfare, living and boarding. Students must pay their visa fee to China and the traveling expense from their hometown to Washington, DC.

The hands-on learners will stay with a host family. These host families are carefully screened by the Chinese government to earn the honor.

"Their child will be around high school age to keep our students as company. The young teenagers can learn from each other," said Chang.

Buzzelli will attend the Nanjing Foreign Language School and take different subject area classes in Chinese.

"I won't know exactly what types of classes I'll be enrolled in until I get there and meet with the school officials to decide what I can and cannot handle with my limited Chinese," said Buzzelli.

Buzzelli and Genco each spent time at a Chinese language immersion camp sponsored by the Ohio State University Chinese Flagship Program.

It improved their Chinese speaking skills and immersed them in the culture. The two will continue to improve and expand their knowledge as they spend their time abroad.

Application forms and information to study abroad next year will be posted in August on www.nsliforyouth.org.



Dana Buzzelli and her first Chinese teacher