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Matthew Park receives \$20,000 Horatio Alger National Scholarship

Special to the Banner

Walker Valley High School can now add a national scholarship winner to its list of distinguished faculty, staff and students.

Senior Matthew Park was recently named one of 105 distinguished high school students to be awarded the Horatio Alger National Scholarship for 2007. The Walker Valley student is the son of Shannan Park and Robby Park.

The award is a \$20,000 grant given annually to a select number of students across the United States who demonstrate upstanding character as well as

an ability to overcome adversity.

Park submitted an online entry in the fall of 2006. The online essay requires applicants to reflect on adversity they have overcome in their life. Each applicant also had to select an individual who was a member of the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans and reflect on this individual as a role model or example to future generations.

"I wanted to write on Billy Graham," explained the Walker Valley student. "He is such a significant leader not only in the eyes of American citizens but

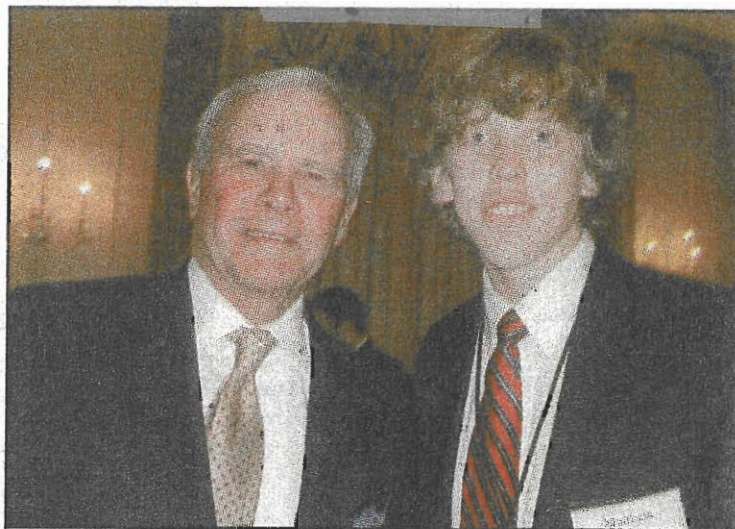
also throughout the world. He is well-respected and certainly exemplifies qualities that are important to me as a young person."

Billy Graham was selected as a member of the association in 1965.

Park's entry was selected in January of this year. He was chosen out of 45,000 national applicants and was invited to attend the Horatio Alger banquet in honor of the 105 individuals selected in 2007.

Upon hearing news of his

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HORATIO ALGER SCHOLAR — Walker Valley High School senior Matthew Park, right, was selected by the Horatio Alger Association as one of its 105 distinguished scholars for 2007. Park, who received a \$20,000 scholarship, is shown with national television newsman Tom Brokaw at the Horatio Alger Association banquet in Washington, D.C.

Park

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accomplishment. Park he could hardly believe his good fortune.

"It was amazing," he said. "I never really thought about being chosen. I instantly thought this never happens to someone from Cleveland, Tenn."

Park recently returned home from a banquet held in the nation's capitol.

"The trip was unbelievable," he said. "We spent a few hours out of the five days sight-seeing, so needless to say, our schedule was certainly full.

"It is hard to describe a trip to (Washington) D.C. where the sights are not at the top of your list of great events, but that was pretty much the case," he continued.

Park and other students were entertained by some of the most influential and distinguished Americans during his time there.

"I shook hands with Buzz Aldrin, Tom Brokaw and Howard Schultz," the Bradley County student said.

"It was incredible to be able to hear how these individuals were influenced throughout their lives and what made an impression on them when they were my age," Park said.

During his stay in Washington, Park and the other scholars were treated to a side of the Capitol only its insiders get to see. The scholar medals were awarded in the U.S. Supreme Court building with the winners being taken into the chamber room for the Justices. They arrived with Clarence Thomas.

"This was probably the most humbling event of the week," said Park. "As we left the chamber upon receiving the medals, there were hundreds of multi-millionaires, governmental leaders and American icons cheering and clapping for us," he said. "It was extremely moving."

The Horatio Alger Association capped off its event with a \$10,000-a-plate dinner held to honor the national scholars.

Ed McMahon and Lou Dobbs

were hosts for the event and encouraged the young people in attendance to continue to strive for excellence even when that may be a difficult path.

The money raised by the dinner is used to provide scholarships to essay winners for years to come.

"The entire week was just a great experience," said Park. "I am so appreciative to members of the association for what they provide for numerous students like myself. This will be something I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

Members of the Horatio Alger Association Distinguished Americans include Billy Graham, Buzz Aldrin, Jenny Craig, Howard Schultz, Ronald Reagan (the last president to be a member), Gene Autry, Tom Selleck, Hank Aaron, Tom Brokaw and James Earl Jones.

Park represents the second member of the Walker Valley family to be recognized with the Horatio Alger Scholar Award. Judy Pruett, who is currently a Walker Valley teacher and volleyball coach, was awarded a Horatio Alger scholarship in 1987.

Park plans to attend the University of Tennessee at Knoxville this fall, majoring in journalism and electronic media. He hopes to one day be involved in the broadcast and telecommunications industry.

Echoes

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Epperson, group member. "It is a great honor. We are very humbled. These will be honors that we can place at the Master's feet for we truly owe everything to him."

The annual Blue Springs Valley Gospel Sing held by the Singing Echoes will be held July 18 through 21. This is the 37th year for the Singing Echoes.

Study: Dieting fails in th