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Foley resident awarded Horatio Alger grant

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Ashley D. McKain of Foley has been awarded the "Washington Family Horatio Alger Scholarship of Excellence Grant" by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. The grant will help pay for her postgraduate education. McKain is one of the first recipients of the newest scholarship program in the association's set of programs.

The grant is \$20,000 annually and lasts three years.

McKain was eligible for this scholarship because she is a 2002 alumna of the Horatio Alger National Scholarship Program - an award given to high school seniors who have persevered in overcoming adversity while also demonstrating excellence in academics, character and contributions to their community.

The Washington Family Horatio Alger Scholarship of Excellence Grant is awarded to those seeking graduate and doctoral degrees and is made possible by a \$10 million donation from Chairman Emeritus and Life Association member Dennis R. Washington and wife Phyllis.

"These scholars are dedicated to the constant pursuit of learning and giving," Washington said. "We are proud to support them as they continue to succeed in their educational, career and community endeavors."

As a young teenager, McKain and her family endured a lengthy and difficult custody battle over her nephew, to whom she now refers as her younger brother. While the process was difficult, McKain said she found release in her academic work. She is a 2006 graduate of the University of South Alabama, where she received a bachelor's degree in anthropology.

Sponsors said McKain continues to grow from her earlier experience and, with the help of the Washington Family Horatio Alger Scholarship of Excellence Grant, will attend the University of Alabama for a doctorate in optometry. She hopes one day to open a private practice and be involved in associations that ensure the quality and advancement of the profession to meet the needs of the community.

"The Horatio Alger Association truly changes your life," McKain said when receiving the award. "Its program is different from others because it doesn't just give a scholarship and step away, but rather, it is in your life forever."

The Horatio Alger Association offers three annual scholarship programs: the National Scholarship Program and state scholarship programs, available to high school seniors in all 50 states, and the Horatio Alger Military Veterans Scholarship Program for U.S. veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. The association awards more than \$12 million annually in college scholarships and has given more than \$63 million to deserving students since 1984.