

University School Actress Wins Carbonell Scholarship Award



Oh Laramie, My Laramie

The only thing more moving than Rachel Brooks' on-stage performance as Reggie Fluty in *The Laramie Project* is her real-life dedication to human rights. Portraying the police officer who saw what hate looks like when she tried to save a barely breathing Matthew Shepard affected Brooks deeply.

"I'm doing everything I can," the USchool senior said as she twisted her bracelet benefiting the Matthew Shepard Foundation to display its message 'Equality: Nothing More, Nothing Less'.

"If I were to ask my great-grandma 'how did you learn about civil rights?' she'd say 'I lived it. I helped create that movement.' And now I feel like I'm living this movement.

"I keep pushing by showing *The Laramie Project* DVD and talking about the kid who was beaten up by his classmates and the video posted on YouTube. *The Laramie Project* is even more relevant now than it was in 1998 [when Shepard died]. And if you don't realize the violence that is happening, you can't change it. So I'm seeing everything there is to see, learning everything there is to learn, and educating others.

"If I had not had the chance to be a part of Human Dignity Week and *The Laramie Project*, I would have felt that I had missed out. If you ask me in 20 years, 'what shows did you do in high school?', *The Laramie Project* will be the first one that comes to mind because it was the one that meant the most to me.

"Being able to do something so relevant, so real... I'm just grateful," Brooks said.

University School senior Rachel Brooks took to the stage once again, this time to accept a Student Carbonell Award and Scholarship. The award and \$1,000 scholarship is presented to graduating seniors who demonstrate talent and commitment to theatre, academic achievement, and who will pursue a degree in theatre or journalism. Brooks was presented with the honor during The Carbonell Awards—South Florida's answer to the Tony Awards.

The award is one of many earned by Brooks for her performances in both theatre and forensics. Last year, Brooks won the South Florida Cappie award for "Featured Actress in a Musical" for her work in *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*. During her time on the speech and debate circuit, Brooks captured five national championship titles in both Dramatic and Humorous Interpretation. (She was named Novice State Champion her freshman year.) Equally comfortable in starring roles and behind-the-scenes efforts, Brooks also helped direct last year's Middle School musical, *Bye Bye Birdie*.

"Rachel has taken to the stage both in theatre and forensics at University School and truly demonstrated a passion for her characters.

There is no doubt; Rachel will continue to shine brightly as a performer, as she continues her journey in the performing arts!"

- University School Director of Arts Jenny Cook