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Basilicata Cultural Society of Canada

Scholarship Application

One of the many commandments of being an Italian is that without family, one truly has nothing. Whether it is an Italian from New York, New Jersey, Woodbridge, or straight from heart of it all, Italy, this Italian value holds true in all Italian households, especially one where there exists "Lucani" heritage. I am extremely fortunate for the family I have, and I can honestly say that each of my grandparents have positively influenced my education and my overall way of life.

One of the strongest Lucani women in my life was Nonna Rosa Manieri (my father's mother). She firmly stood up for what she believed in. Some might say she was a tad stubborn at times. While some people might frown upon it, I find it admirable, and not simply because I have inherited these traits myself. I find it necessary at times to be firm with one's beliefs and occasionally stubborn, because this enables me to achieve my goals, to be determined, and to stand up for what I believe in.

My Nonno Michele Liberatore (my father's father), a Lucani immigrant who worked hard his whole life, taught me that education is one of the most important aspects of living a full life. Even though he has simply an elementary school education, he is one of the wisest men I have ever met and have had the pleasure of knowing. After his Sunday meal of his favourite pasta, *fettine*, and *vino* with peaches, I would listen to him talk about how much he loves me, how it is important to give love back, how it is important to love life, and above all, how it is important to stay in school. When I was

younger, I was unsure as to why he would talk to me many times about these things.

However, now I am mature enough to understand that he only wants the best for me.

Lastly, my Nonna Quirina Volpe (my mother's mother) cared for me ever since I was a little baby. She is my biggest role model. I someday wish to be as loving, caring, kind and funny as she is. Whenever I visit her with my mother, she always asks me "Michele, hai mangiato oggi?" in her own Abruzzese dialect, to which I would respond, "Si, nonna, si!" However, my Nonna Quirina is no longer physically able to care for others any more, so my mother and her brothers try their very best to care for her in return by visiting her at least three or four times a week. My nonna is a true testimony that if one gives love, one will undoubtedly receive it back. When I become older, I wish to further develop all of these wonderful attributes my grandparents possess.

As a true Italian, and descendant of the Lucani community, I believe in giving back to my community. I have volunteered at Villa Colombo, Vaughan, an Italian oriented long-term care facility, for the past three years. I am very proud of myself in that I have made several senior Italians happy just by visiting them and spending time with them. I have made and served them *espresso*, danced with them, played *bocce* with them, as well as *scopa* and *briscola*. In turn, I have learned a lot from the first generation Italian men, such as learning how to cheat in bocce, as well as *scopa* and *briscola*. I also learned how to make an espresso just right. For example, I know I make good espresso if the sugar takes more than three seconds to sink into the foam. Nevertheless, I always enjoy volunteering at Villa Colombo on weekends because I love the connections that I have with the residents and making them feel happy.

In addition to volunteering at a senior citizens' residence, in my grade 12 year, my Christian Leadership Class took a trip to New Jersey to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. The fact that most of this class was Italian made events on the trip very interesting. However, I believe that my middle-aged Irish-American religion teacher on a bus filled with very spirited Italian teenagers from Woodbridge would say otherwise. While on the job site, our class tried to make hammering, painting, and dry-walling as fun as possible by singing songs that their "nonnos" and "nonnas" taught them. While we received numerous stares from our fellow Americans, I now realize that they were not staring at my classmates singing in another language. Instead, they were staring at me because I do not possess the traditional Italian genes of being able to work on a construction site, specifically not being able to hammer even three nails in a roof. Meanwhile, while my fellow female *paesana* was able to hammer ten nails in the same time period. However, this did not bother me, because I do not hold a grudge, was able to laugh it off, and realized that I had at least tried my best. My teacher then assigned me to another position of being able to help the ladies carry bricks to and from a truck, which was followed by painting the sides of a garage. Throughout this whole experience, I understood the values that my parents and grandparents teach me: sometimes the key to doing a good job at whatever I do is to make it enjoyable, no matter what the task is. I look forward to participating in this community outreach during my post-secondary education.

Currently, I am off to my first year of studies at the University of Toronto, St. Michael's College at the St. George Campus, right in the heart of Downtown Toronto. I have wanted to study there for the longest time because of the diversity that exists in

Toronto, specifically with its people. I have had the pleasure of having not only Italian friends throughout my life, but friends with roots from Spain, France, Portugal, Germany, Mexico, and China. My parents have always taught me that being Italian does not mean to exclude oneself from the world; if anything, it should encourage me to take the opportunity to study in other countries, learn about other cultures and from different people. For example, when I was 12 years old, I travelled to Italy with my parents and my sister. I was amazed that the night we arrived in my mother's home town, there was a Mexican festival. The town was decorated, there were several mariachi bands, and the fajitas were excellent. My relatives, in both the Lucani and Abruzzo regions, tell us that every year the town has a festival dedicated to celebrating the culture of another country. I honestly never suspected something like that in Italy and I was amazed.

Therefore, should I have the distinct honour of earning this scholarship, I will put it towards just that: being able to help my parents pay for my university education, and to hopefully, for (at least) one year study abroad in France, Spain, or Italy. I have loved studying and practicing languages such as French and Spanish for more than four years. With these skills, combined with the knowledge I obtain from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, I hope to one day obtain a job in the field of management overseas.

Upon receiving this scholarship, I would be truly blessed to be able to help my parents invest in my education because they have given me so much already. They gave me the opportunity to study at a private Catholic high school, and have also given me all of the luxuries and necessities I could ask for. All I want to do is make them proud of my efforts and success in my post-secondary education.

My appreciation of the Italian culture has grown over the years. To be of Lucani descent is truly a blessing and all aspects of being part of this culture, such as a love for Italy, family, food, and education, have positively affected my way of life. If I were asked to define "being an Italian", it would definitely include the words "unique," "confident," "hard-working," and "nonna's number one fan."