

Busy schedule fits lifestyle for Heartland Lutheran senior



Heartland Lutheran's Claire Mackey is a three-sport athlete who practices running hurdles in one of the school's hallways.

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Claire Mackey has led a peripatetic life from childhood right through her senior year at Heartland Lutheran High School in Grand Island.

Because her father is a pastor, the family has moved often. During her young life, Mackey has lived in Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin and Nebraska, where it settled in Shelton.

Mackey has attended public schools as a youngster, was home schooled as a fifth- and sixth-grader and then spent her last month of sixth grade as a student at Zion Lutheran School in Kearney.

She spent all of her seventh-grade year at Zion Lutheran before transferring to Trinity Lutheran in Grand Island for her eighth-grade year.

Mackey carpoled with friends from Shelton to Heartland Lutheran High School as a freshman and has been doing the driving for a carpool to Heartland Lutheran ever since she was a sophomore.

Next year, Mackey will be a freshman at Concordia University in Chicago.

Now, many Lutheran high school students in Nebraska might consider attending Concordia University in Seward, but Mackey has her reasons for going to the school in Chicago.

"I have a lot of family there," said Mackey, who said her extended family in Chicago includes a grandmother and an aunt and uncle. She also has extended family living in Michigan.

But Mackey also wants to attend Concordia University in Chicago because that school will allow her to play both volleyball and basketball, while Concordia University in Seward wanted her to pick just one sport.

"The coaches are great," said Mackey, who noted her rapport with the coaches was another reason she was attracted to the school, which is actually in the suburb of River Forest.

That's fine with Mackey, who admits living in the city itself might be a little intimidating. Even going to school in the suburbs seems like something of a challenge, with Mackey wondering if she should outfit her car with a GPS.

"I love sports," said Mackey, who has played volleyball and basketball all four years at Heartland Lutheran High School. She also has run hurdles in track.

She said volleyball and basketball are her favorites, with track lagging a little behind. "I do that to stay in shape."

Mackey said she is not getting scholarships to play basketball and volleyball at the school. Any scholarships she receives

are on the academic side of the ledger.

Growing up, Mackey has played a number of other sports just for fun, including softball and soccer. She also played on the junior Storm hockey team in Kearney for two years as a seventh- and eighth-grader.

Even if Mackey played no sports, she would be a girl on the move. She's in her second year of Community Youth Council membership. Mackey said older students at Heartland Lutheran who had been active with CYC encouraged her to apply.

Mackey filled out an application, had an interview and was selected to be a member of the CYC, whose membership also includes one other student from Heartland Lutheran.

"It's something I enjoy doing," said Mackey, who noted she never knew the CYC would get her involved in so many activities and take up so much time. Even though the hours involved were a little surprising, she said, "It's worked out fine."

CYC activities include Adopt-A-Park, a project that was recently profiled in The Independent, and an art contest. Mackey said the big event of the year is Family Day in the Park. Last June it attracted 2,500 people.

She said she enjoys the fact CYC brings students together from the community's different high schools.

"We all get along really well," Mackey said.

She also likes the fact CYC has helped her learn more about Grand Island. It has allowed her to meet many adults in the community and get familiar with some of Grand Island's business.

"I like talking to people," she said. "I like to make new friends."

Wendy Meyer-Jerke, Community Youth Council coordinator, said Mackey "has really stepped up to take a leadership role this year. She is one of the key leaders of the youth council."

Meyer-Jerke noted Mackey has donated 87 hours to Community Youth Council since Sept. 1, 2008. In addition to the projects Mackey mentioned, Meyer-Jerke said the senior has participated in Join Hands Day at the Grand Island Veterans Home, Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat and the Pencil Project.

Meyer-Jerke said Mackey is chairing this year's Family Day in the Park.

At Heartland Lutheran, Mackey is a member of the school's Quiz Bowl team, which includes about 14 students. Only six people at a time can compete, though, and Mackey said she is not a member of the "starting team."

"I'm more of a JV player," said Mackey, who noted it can be fun watching the academic competition from the sidelines.

Mackey is a member of Heartland Lutheran's National Honor Society. The organization has helped put on blood drives and a Pennies for Patients contest between classrooms.

Students put pennies in their own jar to try to win points for the teams. However, nickels, dimes and quarters put into an opposing team's jars count as negative points. Money collected goes to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Mackey also has been a Big Sister this year, visiting her Little Sister one day a week over the mid-day lunch/recess period. Because Mackey works as a teacher aide after her own lunch period, it works for her to be a little late back to class one day a week.

Mackey plans to major in business management at Concordia College. But once again, her choice reveals her peripatetic nature. She noted business management would give a choice of many different careers following graduation.

Even so, Mackey holds out the possibility of changing majors, noting many students change majors three times while in college. Mackey, though, does not want to be too peripatetic in switching majors, noting, "I'd like to graduate in no more than five years."