Gift changed everything for animal bioscience student

Olivia Carolan has dreamt about becoming a veterinarian since an early age. She was raised on a farm in south-west England, surrounded by animals from her very first steps: cats, dogs, and her first love—horses. “I grew up with horses, just like my mom and her parents did,” she said.

Her interest in animals started early, learning to ride horses and care for their injuries. However, it was a personal and heartbreaking experience that settled her decision to pursue an education in veterinary medicine.

“It was putting my horse down—Denahli—who was only eight years old. He had cancerous lumps on his jaw, which is a melanoma tumor common among grey horses,” she explained. “He was my first horse and the one I had the strongest connection with. It was like losing a part of me…he was my best friend.” She added, “That solidified the thought of becoming a veterinarian because I couldn’t do anything to help him with the pain.”

Olivia set her sights on the University of Saskatchewan. It had everything she desired: a dedicated animal bioscience program and a veterinary medicine college, that together, focus on a range of animals, from farm animals to domestic pets.

Although she knew the U of S was the right place for her, she was unsure it was possible due to financial constraints. She elaborated, “I was thrilled upon my acceptance to the U of S but was burdened by the cost. I knew I would not be able to attend, and decided to go to a local university that was more affordable. But I still felt

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Leading change in the library, one book at a time

Since arriving in Saskatoon in 1971, Neil Richards has developed a special place in his heart for the University of Saskatchewan Library.

“I am not a U of S grad,” he commented, “but the library has, to some extent, become my second home.”

Neil began his 29-year career at the University Library in the reference department and later transferred to the special collections department. Although officially retired, he devotes four hours a day to University Archives and Special Collections to acquire research materials of interest.

Neil Richards shows off some of the rare books in the University Archives and Special Collections. Some of the oldest books in the Neil Richards Collection of Sexual and Gender Diversity date back to the 1820s.

Neil Richards has developed a special collection of gay and lesbian materials in Canada. To encourage use of these holdings he helped develop a unique library digital portal: Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity (http://library2.usask.ca/srsd).

Neil’s work has allowed him to pursue another endeavor dear to his heart—building the library’s collection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) resources. In the reference department he assisted students and faculty in finding LGBT materials. This gave him the opportunity to pinpoint areas which the library needed to improve its information offerings. Neil made many literature purchase recommendations and donations to the collection, and the U of S now boasts the largest academic collection of gay and lesbian materials in Canada. To encourage use of these holdings he helped develop a unique library digital portal: Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity (http://library2.usask.ca/srsd).

Neil is pleased to see students benefit from his contributions. “Readers sometimes see my name on a bookplate and approach me to thank me because that particular title was meaningful or helpful to them,” he noted. There has also been rapid growth in the academic use of these resources in curriculum, which is Neil’s ultimate goal.

Neil has actively supported the Neil Richards Collection of Sexual and Gender Diversity, established in 2011 in his honour. “You have to lead yourself,” he said. “There are many other projects to which I could contribute, but I really feel that if I didn’t take a role with this particular collection it would not have grown and thrived.”

The Richards collection, rapidly approaching 5,000 titles, is the library’s second largest special collection. It includes items that are too fragile, rare or valuable to be placed in the library’s circulating collections. Beyond books and manuscripts, the collection preserves items representing the popular culture of LGBT communities, including movement and lifestyle magazines, pulp literature, comics and cartoon books, posters, vintage...
postcards and sound recordings. Many of the titles were either donated by Neil, or were acquired through his efforts, making this a truly personal collection.

David Bindle, special collections librarian, acknowledged the difference Neil’s contributions have already made. “He carefully considers how materials will enhance the existing collection and in doing so, he’s created a truly magnificent collection, and one that is not sitting gathering dust,” remarked Bindle. “We seem to have a non-stop stream of research projects emanating from these materials as well as regular visits from groups of students eager to have a tour of the collection.”

Neil has created a lasting legacy at the University Library, but his commitment continues; he has established a bequest for the U of S to continue his life’s work. His estate gift will support the purchase of additional library resources and support educational activities related to gay and lesbian issues on campus.

Neil has the gratifying opportunity to witness the impact of his gifts firsthand. He shared, “When students approach you to thank you, you know you’ve done something valuable.”

a nagging sense of disappointment that I could not attend the U of S.”

It was a U of S donor that changed everything for Olivia. She received much-needed financial support to enter the College of Agriculture and Bioresources’ Animal Bioscience program when she was awarded the Peter Lewochko Bursary, funded through a bequest gift.

She has fond memories of the moment her family received the news. Olivia explained, “My mom phoned me as I had received a package from the U of S. She opened it up right away and immediately started crying. She said, ‘Oh Olivia— they have given you a bursary for all of your tuition and books! You can go to the school you really want to go to!’” Olivia said she was thrilled.

Now in the third year of her undergraduate program, Olivia hopes to be accepted in the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in the next two years. Her ultimate career goal is to assist pet owners in making health and nutrition decisions and reduce animal suffering.

“Without receiving this award, I would not be where I am today,” revealed Olivia. “It gives me immense joy that I can be here today and set my sights and aspirations even higher.”
Welcoming you to the Greystone Circle

If you have already included the University of Saskatchewan in your Will, thank you so much! We are humbled by your kindness and generosity. Your thoughtfulness reminds us that our university would not be what it is without people like you.

If you would like to let us know about your gift, we'd like to hear from you. It’s not necessary, but we would love to have the opportunity to show our appreciation and welcome you to the Greystone Circle.

What’s the Greystone Circle? It’s our way of thanking you today for your future support. As a member, you will receive regular updates from the university, be invited to enjoy exclusive events and generally made to feel special—because you are!

This past June, President Peter Stoicheff and Chancellor Emerita Vera Pezer hosted an afternoon social. This private event for Greystone Circle members took place at the new Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre on our Saskatoon campus. Members enjoyed hearing from Olivia Carolan, the student you’ve just read about, and were treated to a First Nations dancing and drumming performance.

We are already planning for next year’s event and hope to see you there. Simply call us at 306-966-3269 and let us know you are interested in becoming a member.

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