

Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation Scholarship Application

My name is Betsy Manero, and I am a climbing guide. If you told me that that would be how I introduced myself five years ago, I would have said you were crazy. I was a competitive ski racer starting a journalism degree at Saint Michael's College in Vermont. It didn't take me long to quit ski racing and find a love of climbing through the college's amazing outdoor program, the Wilderness Program.

The Wilderness Program opened my eyes to what I was capable of. The two program directors, Todd and Eben, pushed me and helped me to expand my comfort zone. I always knew that I loved the outdoors, but taking students to explore the Green Mountains on weekend trips made me realize that I have a passion for teaching in the outdoors. Through the program, I started down the American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) track by taking the first step and receiving a Single Pitch Instructor certification.

Some parents might not understand the climbing lifestyle, but I've been very fortunate. Tom and Candace, my amazing parents, have been very supportive in every out of the box decision I've ever made. I still remember when I decided to become a vegetarian when I was a rebellious twelve-year-old. I thought I would really throw a wrench in their dinner plans. Instead my mom bought me a vegetarian cook book, and was delighted that we would get to spend quality time learning how to cook tofu together. That was the same year that my dad introduced me to ski touring in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. When I told them I was moving to the Tetons to be a ski and climbing bum in hopes of one day being a mountain guide, my dad was ecstatic. He finally had a couch to sleep on in Jackson Hole. While they might not fully understand what I do (like most Americans, they're understanding of climbing is a mix of the Dawn Wall and the recent Everest movie) they've been happy to support me as much as the can along the way.

After graduating from Saint Michael's College with a degree in Media Studies in 2015, I decided to continue guiding. I ran kids programs as the Rock Specialist for Petra Cliffs in Burlington. Andrea Charest became a friend and mentor of mine, and I was able to learn how to be a better guide under her instruction.

Though I loved living in Burlington and working for Andrea, bigger mountains were calling and it was time to move on to Jackson Hole. I fell in love with the Tetons while passing through on a road trip, and never left. While living in Jackson, I was fortunate enough to start working for Jackson Hole Mountain Guides. Some of my coworkers boast hundreds of Grand Teton summits and years of experience. As a 23 year old Teton newbie, I worried I would be cowering in the shadow of giants. Instead, I found myself being brought into the family and learning from more amazing mentors.

I love my job. I work for one of the top guide companies in the country and get to help people live out their wildest dreams in the Tetons. Seeing a client complete a goal, no matter how big or small, is almost as rewarding as completing my own goals in the mountains. I love that infectious joy that comes from seeing someone push him or herself harder than they thought they could. It makes me grateful for all the amazing mentors I've had in my climbing and guiding career.

This past summer was a hard one in the Tetons. We lost a guide. It was my first real exposure to death in the mountains. I still remember the image of him ark into his final resting place in Valhalla Canyon off of the Grand Teton. Gary Falk was one of the most experienced guides in the Tetons. He was a fully certified IFMGA guide, which is like having a masters or PhD in guiding. Everyone looked up to him wanted to learn from him. Watching his accident made me wonder if I was pursuing the right career. Did I even want to take anymore AMGA courses? If Gary, who had completed the entire guide track, could have such a tragic accident, then what was I doing in this industry?

But that's not what Gary would have wanted. After going through that tragic experience, I realized that I wanted to pursue an AMGA education in order to make myself the safest and best guide I can be.

While I have started down the AMGA track, I still have a lot of work to do to become a fully certified guide. The next step in my guiding education is to take a Rock Guide Course next spring. I've been preparing for it by working with my mentors, shadowing as many senior guides in the Tetons as I can and fine-tuning my climbing in Red Rock and Moab over the last month. I've paired down my lifestyle to save money by living in Guadalupe, my 2000 Jeep Cherokee, and eating more rice and beans than is probably healthy in a diet. I worked three jobs in Jackson on top of working for Jackson Hole Mountain Guides to make ends meet and keep paying off my mountain of student loans. While I'm trying to save as much as I can, AMGA training is expensive. A Rock Guide Course costs \$2,650, plus I'll have to take at least two weeks off from work and travel to Boulder to participate in the course. I'm applying to this scholarship to help off set the costs of the course. I hope that by completing it and continuing my AMGA education, I can continue to help other reach their climbing goals in the Tetons and beyond.