

Flyin Ryan Hawks Adventure Scholarship - Personal Essay

The pursuit of adventure has given my life direction and purpose. The word itself has held different meanings over the years. In the beginning, adventure was something unattainable, reserved only for the most seasoned veterans, and something that could only be found on far-flung expeditions. An idea perpetuated by social media and TV, it was a concept, something that I was continually pursuing but never experiencing. One day I learned that true adventure is not just a word that describes action-packed ski movies or epic expeditions into remote wilderness. Adventure is a way of life, an idea that doesn't belong to a person. And can be harnessed by anyone willing to step out of their comfort zone. An idea that can empower people to pursue something, to believe in themselves, and the power of teamwork. Adventure is the pursuit of experiences that challenge us and encourage us to learn and grow. It can be as simple as your first bike ride around the block or as bold as the first ascent of a mountain.

For some reason, the pursuit of adventure has always been a part of my being. I have always been driven by challenge and motivated to step outside my comfort zone. For me, it has been in the form of adventure sports like mountain biking, backcountry skiing, rock climbing, and many more. Growing up, I never turned down an opportunity for adventure and subsequently have gotten to try many different types of adventure sports. I feel incredibly grateful for all of these opportunities. Each time I tried something new or overcame a challenge, I grew, learning more about myself and what I could do.

Growing up in rural southwestern New Hampshire, I spent nearly all of my time outside. Running around the woods and playing in the snow, in fact, that's still what I do now! When I wasn't building snow forts or riding our family's old snowmobile, I could be found skiing at the

local ski areas, racing for my school's cross-country ski team, and eventually working as a ski patroller. Through all these experiences and countless hours spent in the snow, I have developed a deep love and appreciation for winter that I want to share with others.

After gaining personal experience in adventure sports and discovering the tremendous benefits of spending time in nature, my next adventure became: How do I share the beauty of nature and the benefits of pursuing adventure with others?! At this point in my life, I had been a student with a farm-based wilderness expedition school for kids and young adults called Krocka Expeditions for quite some time. We embarked on countless expeditions, from cross-country skiing in the Chic-Chocs to sailing the coast of Maine. Eventually, I started working for them as a guide apprentice. This became the perfect avenue to share the wonder of nature and the value of adventure sports with others through outdoor education.

My constant companion in all of my adventures was my camera. After picking one up around 12 years old, I started taking pictures, and I haven't stopped. I fell in love with storytelling and the ability to share my passion with others. The camera became an amazing way for me to inspire people with the beauty of nature and the power of adventure.

All of these experiences have led me to where I am today. Embarking on my most ambitious adventure yet, an adventure that is the culmination of everything that I believe in and am driven to pursue. It combines my passion for wintertime and adventure sports with my passion for storytelling and sharing.

All of this has inspired me to make a documentary about my 300-mile self-supported cross-country ski expedition from the Canadian border to my hometown of Walpole, New Hampshire. The film will follow the expedition and explore our connection to winter, featuring interviews with locals to talk and discovering how winter has changed. I have already started the

fundraising process of reaching out to sponsors and donors. I have also created a project webpage and video to promote the project. In exciting news New Hampshire, PBS has committed to broadcasting the film once the film is complete.

My experience with adventure sports, coupled with my years of camera experience, makes me capable to tell this story. Since the film is independently produced, I am responsible for all aspects of production, from fundraising to filming to editing. I have learned so much in the process already and still have much to learn.

The biggest challenge in this adventure is funding. Funding helps pay for the camera and expedition equipment that I will use and for my livelihood as a filmmaker. That is why I have decided to request a \$2000 scholarship from the Flynn Ryan Hawkes Foundation. The foundation's generosity which has helped countless people pursue adventure is inspiring. Even if I am not awarded the full request, any amount helps and is greatly appreciated. This type of scholarship would help ensure that this project can happen and the story of winter can be told. Thank you for taking the time to review my application.