

Personal Essay - Katie Hersom

My name is Katie Hersom. I am 17 years old, and I love to ski. I was born in Manchester, VT and moved to Whitefish, MT when I was five. I skied for the first time when I was one year old. I have loved it since then. My mom says that when I was little, I would sob every time the lift closed. I know a lot of people who are better than me at skiing, but I have never met someone who loves it more than I do. I'm the athlete that refuses to stop for lunch to get two more laps. I ski in any and all conditions, and I love it. One time my teammate told me that I only love freeride because I'm good at it. I told her she had it backwards. I'm only good at it because I love it.

When I was in 2nd grade I joined the ski race team. I raced for six seasons, then decided it was not for me. My problem with it was that I did not like being told where to ski. I wanted to ski what I wanted, which was more than gates. After quitting in 7th grade. I tried Freestyle for a season, but that wasn't for me either. Then I didn't ski competitively for a season. I just skied for me. I never thought I would ski for anything else again. A lot of people are very lucky, because they find freeride. I think that I am even luckier, because Freeride found me. When I was Fifteen (grade 10) my home mountain, Whitefish Mountain Resort proudly hosted their first regional. I did it competing for the Freestyle team, though I was no longer technically a member. I think that is the action that changed my life the most. I fell in love with it, everything about it. I loved the athletes, the coaches, the competition, and more than anything I loved how much everyone loved skiing. I went home that night, and I told my mom that I needed to do this sport. The next day I double ejected off a cliff, after qualifying first, but I ended up being given the Campbell Smith Spirit Award, and somehow landed myself an invite to practice next weekend and a spot on Flathead Freeride. Over the span of the next two months, I completed and won the regional competitions in Panorama, BC, Big Sky, Mt, and Castle Mountain, Alberta. These results were enough to earn a spot in the Big Sky, and Lake Louise nationals. After winning Big Sky and podium in Louise, I qualified for the North American Championships third less than three months after joining. NorAms were in Kicking Horse that year. I didn't complete my best, but I still had a great time. I was also given The Flying Ryan Spit Award, which led me to this scholarship. That season taught me a lot about who I was and who I wanted to be.

Last season was my second season in Freeride, but my first full season. It was intimidating to come back because this time people had expectations, including myself. Less than a week into the season, while training at a trampoline park, I hairline fractured my ankle. I could barely bring myself to walk. I went to the school nurse, a medical professional, to be told, the level of bruising highly indicated a break, but I downplayed the injury as much as possible, so I could ski. I never went to a proper doctor and only found out it had been broken because in May, six months later, there was still bruising, which the doctor informed me was a sure sign that this was no sprain. I remember the first time I skied on it. I remember how much it hurt, and that I could barely hold an edge with it. It was horrifying, because I didn't know how I would be able to ski on it at the level I wanted to. It was horrifying, because I didn't want to lose skiing, and the season is short. I'm not sure how I learned to ski on it, but I did. I guess I learned to tune the pain out, or maybe got used to it honestly, I'm not sure. I just know that it didn't matter how much it hurt. I know what I did was stupid, but I would do it all over again if put in the same circumstances. I would not give up my season, so I didn't. I skied over 100 days and still competed. I went to all my comps, and still qualified 4th for The Championship of the Americas (DNF). All on a broken ankle. Though this injury was awful to go through, and still haunts me, it taught me what I am capable of persevering through. It taught me that even pain can't take the joy of what I love, and I know those are valuable lessons.

When I look forward, I don't know exactly what I want. I'm told no one really knows at my age, but I do know one thing. I want to take freeride as far as I possibly can. Next season is my third and final season in IFSA Junior and I am going to give it everything that I can. I have goals and I have it in myself to

accomplish them. I will be at full strength and have a full season of training, for the first and last time in Juniors, and I am going to use it. I truly love this sport and after this year of juniors I have every intention of continuing with it. I hope to go from juniors into the qualifier series, and if all goes well, I will take it further. I want to take it as far as possible, but to do that I need help. My parents are extremely supportive of my dreams, but the financial aid provided by this scholarship would be extremely helpful. If awarded this scholarship, I will put it towards a plethora of things. First and foremost, it will go to the already established costs of freeride to help offset the financial burden this love of mine has put on my parents. The other thing that this scholarship would do is open a huge door in the sense of my training. If awarded, I will be able to purchase a Lake Louise season pass. Lake Louise opens early November and closes early May. This would add two months of skiing and training to my season. I have people who have offered me a place to stay, but between transportation and the pass itself it's a large financial burden, but I think it is a wonderful opportunity to improve my skiing, as well as enable me to get the life/world experience a new place has to offer.

In conclusion I am coming to you asking for help to continue to do what I love to do and do it better. After receiving your spirit award and learning about your program, I would like to add that in addition to the scholarship itself, I would be honored to be a part of your program. My coach, Kyle, taught us the Flyin Ryan core values a lot last season, so that made me want to be a part of this as well. This program is so positive and genuine. It would be lovely to be a part of and represent. I genuinely love this sport, and I know it will always be a large part of my life and myself. I appreciate your consideration and taking your time to review my application.

Core Values ----

Love everything you can as much as you can
Don't let the worst of you ruin the best of you
Do not be afraid to care
find joy in the little things
Be kind to the earth
Change what you can and accept what you can't
Allow yourself to be yourself
Use your head to follow your heart
Smile at strangers
Don't waste time

Bio:

My name is Katie Hesom. I'm 17 years old and I'm a competitive freeride skier. I am from Whitefish, a small town in Montana. I'm a senior in high school, and it is my final year competing in IFSA Juniors. This will be my third season, and I couldn't be more excited! When I'm not skiing, I'm probably wake surfing, skateboarding, rock climbing, traveling, with friends, and outdoors as much as possible.