

Dear Gracious Donor,

I am a fulltime student enrolled at Northwestern Michigan College at the Great Lakes Culinary Institute. Educationally, it is my plan to complete my associate of applied science degree in culinary arts and continue my educational studies at Ferris State University through the University Center, pursuing a bachelor's degree in hospitality management, as well as, a bachelor's degree in agricultural management and plant science through Michigan State University.

For the past ten years, I have devoted my life to agriculture and the art of planting, cultivating and harvesting the finest quality produce that you can find in the market today. I have proudly been a part of a farm in which I have worked tirelessly to absorb and learn every facet of the business. During peak season, I manage approximately 200 employees and the business in its entirety. I have a passion for agriculture and creating true farm-to-table cuisine utilizing the ingredients that I am able to grow and harvest myself. Due to my love for agriculture, food, creating products that reflect my passion, and coupled with my devotion to providing unparalleled service to those who support our local businesses, I have decided that in order to be able to accomplish my goals, it is imperative that I have a formal education to ensure that I have the proper skill set required to operate a thriving and successful business of my own. I have made it my mission to learn and absorb as much as I can from the culinary and business leaders that I have been fortunate enough to work with. By learning from those that are at the forefront of their professions, I have and will continue to learn their skills, techniques, and ideas and pair them with my own skills, experience, and vision to create something truly unique of my own. Over the course of the last five years, I have been working on a business plan that I will bring to fruition after graduation. I have worked with professionals throughout the planning process in order to have a solid plan in place and be able to properly execute it when finished with my schooling. I am a goal oriented, hardworking, and driven single mother. When I look at my son and all the promise and hope that he holds, it motivates me to work harder and more feverishly than ever before to accomplish the goals that I have set before myself in order to ensure that we both have a bright and successful future. It is my goal to be able to support myself and my child, do something that I have a passion for and enjoy, and to be the rock solid, driving force that makes it all happen.

In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family, all things outdoors, and devote as much of my free time as I am able, to learning more about the things that I have a passion for in life. I am an avid backpacker and kayaker and have devoted many hours to nature and volunteering with different conservation groups whose efforts support maintaining and protecting some of the most beautiful places nature has to offer. I have devoted many weeks to working with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition in preserving and building trails along parts of the Continental Divide throughout the state of Colorado. I have volunteered through my church in promoting healthy living by teaching cooking classes. I volunteer with school aged children's groups that have focused their efforts on teaching children the value of healthy eating and have introduced horticultural programs into their curriculum. And last but certainly not least, whenever the opportunity presents itself, I volunteer at the Great Lakes Culinary Institute for many of the events held at Lobdell's, such as the Harvest Dinner, Great Lakes - Great Chefs, and the World Cuisine dinner. Whether work, play, or somewhere in between, I always say, "if something is worth doing, it's worth doing well." I live by those words and strive to be the very best at whatever it is that I do, at all times.

With the help of a scholarship, I will be able to stay in school, set goals, achieve them, and not have the aching worry of all the financial burdens that come along with life while attending school or the misfortune of having to terminate my schooling due to financial issues. If awarded the opportunity of a scholarship, I will utilize every penny to secure a bright and successful future for myself and my son, as well as, make sure that I donate and give back to the program when I am finished, in order make a difference in someone else's life. I would like to say, "Thank You" to all that review my application for your time and consideration. It has been nothing short of an honor and great pleasure to be part of NMC and to work alongside and learn from some of the most wonderful instructors that I have ever had the opportunity to meet. I am forever grateful.

With gratitude,

Heidi R. Wilkerson