

Spring 2017 grad prepares for ‘a writer’s life’

BAYTOWN, TX — “Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved,” said William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of State to former Pres. Woodrow Wilson, more than 100 years ago. And while Jennings was likely referring to the destiny of the United States, the sentiment is just as easily applied to humans — especially those who have discovered what they want to do, and more profoundly, who they want to be.

“I want to write. I want to be a writer. I want to touch other people the way I’ve been touched by the writers I love so much. I can’t remember a time when I didn’t love books and didn’t want to live everyday without words,” said 24-year-old Miranda Sprinkle, a May 2017 Lee College graduate who has a plan and a destination clearly in her sights.

“It took me a while to develop that plan, partly because I just wasn’t sure what it would look like,” she said. “I knew what I loved; I love words. I love the possibility of words. But I didn’t know what a career would look like for me — a career that would allow me to support myself while pursuing my passion.”

Without a firm idea of the right career to pursue, Sprinkle opted to work after finishing high school rather than attempting college without well-defined goals. But the urge to write never left her alone, and she started researching degree paths and curricula.

“Over time, I began to realize that what I really wanted to pursue was a literature degree. I think, for me, that’s the best way to prepare myself to become a writer. And that’s what led me to publishing,” she said. “What better way to learn about being a writer than to work with professional writers as an editor at a publishing house?”

Sprinkle enrolled at Lee College for the fall 2014 semester, appreciating that the campus was so close to home and more affordable than other institutions. She wanted to take Honors Program courses to better prepare herself to move on to a university and signed up for “The Human Condition,” a unique seminar-style class that combines the disciplines of English and Humanities and emphasizes open discussion and critical thinking. Her instructors were encouraging, engaging and supportive in a way she had never before seen from a teacher.

“You’re exposed to different writers, philosophers, historians — different points of view on a whole range of ideas,” Sprinkle said. “The semester I took the course it focused on gender. That was the lens through which we viewed everything we learned. That process shows you how important perspective is. The lens you view your world through determines what you think, so changing that lens can deepen and broaden your perspective. I loved it.”

By the time she was taking The Human Condition, Sprinkle was focused on finding the four-year college or university that would be the best fit for her. As she researched the publishing industry, she came to the conclusion that the East Coast was where she needed to be if she was going to be serious about breaking into the world of publishing.

When the acceptance letter came from Roanoke College in Salem, Va., Sprinkle said she cried for about 10 minutes. Through a combination of scholarships, grants and student loans, a little more than 96 percent of tuition, board and meal costs will be

covered — alleviating her fears about the financial burden to her parents, Kim and Jeff Sprinkle.

“My parents and I toured the campus. It was so beautiful and I felt like I really fit in. It just felt right. I wanted this so much,” Sprinkle said. “I just sat there, holding the letter. I kept reading, over and over, the sentence telling me I’d been accepted. The letter informing me how much in scholarships I’d been awarded came a few weeks later.”

That would qualify for many as a major life-moment. Its significance is underscored because Sprinkle did not immediately go to college after graduation. Statistically, college completion becomes even more difficult if a student chooses not to continue on to college immediately after graduating from high school.

“What a blessing,” said Kim Sprinkle. “Miranda would be looking at so much more debt if it weren’t for her time at Lee College. She is the first one in our family to graduate from college and my husband Jeff and I are very proud of her. We are looking forward to her continued progress towards her bachelor’s degree at Roanoke College. Lee College has truly impacted our family.”

Waylon Sprinkle, Miranda’s brother, is a U.S. Navy veteran currently attending Lee College.

“The Lee College Veterans Center has supported him in his pursuit of a criminal justice degree,” said Kim Sprinkle. “And while he’s always wanted to be a lawyer, his instructor at Lee College has helped him identify a range of career options. Now Waylon is considering a career with the FBI. Lee College has certainly played a role in the future of both our children.”

Now, the Sprinkle’s first college graduate finds herself ready to travel down her next path. The family will leave Baytown in late August to drive Miranda to Virginia to begin her new journey at Roanoke College.

And while practical matters like working through the summer to save money and finding a job as soon as she gets to Salem are in the foreground, the writer-in-waiting said she also can’t help but think about what lies ahead: “the life of words I’ve been dreaming of.”

For more information about the courses and opportunities available to students through the Lee College Honors Program, visit www.lee.edu/honors.