

# Education Foundation awards Lawler Scholarship

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**Benjamin Gavin**

Benjamin Gavin has a life goal of visiting every country in the world. His studies abroad during his junior year of college will allow him to check off several countries on his list.

The International Relations Club at Oak Ridge High School generated his interest in international affairs, and the Dr. Adrian R. Lawler Exchange Student Scholarship provided a \$1,000 scholarship to assist him in his studies abroad.

Gavin is spending this semester in Ho Chi Minh City, where he will have opportunities to study economics, humanities, and Asian religions. His studies took him to Tunisia this summer, where he researched the effects of the Arab Spring. Next spring, Gavin will head to Tokyo, Japan, to explore the language, history, politics and culture of that country.

A junior at Loyola University in Chicago, Gavin is the 2013 recipient of the Lawler Scholarship, which supports international study programs and is administered by the Oak Ridge Public Schools Education Foundation. Lawler, an Oak Ridge High School graduate and the second student here to participate in an American Field Service international program in 1957, established the scholarship in 2008 to offer students here similar opportunities to gain tolerance and understanding of people from other cultures.

“Oak Ridge High School really prepared me well for what I am doing now,” Gavin said. Besides his involvement in the International Relations Club, he studied in Germany and hosted a German student while in high school, introducing him to the value of international studies. He is studying abroad through programs of Loyola University.

Gavin, 20, is completing research he began in Africa for an article comparing effects of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt for an undergraduate research journal. He was selected for a Rudis Fellowship by Loyola, receiving one of two research grants awarded each year.

During his visit to Tunisia, he found that the “Arab spring definitely is still visible and alive.” He observed barbed wire cordoning off areas in the capital and heard of clashes between police and Muslims associated with the Salafi movement, he said. He also experienced riding a camel and sleeping under the stars in the Sahara desert and visited a number of historic Berber sites.

In Vietnam now, Gavin expects to work on a service project with a non-governmental organization. “I probably will be working with an NGO that encourages growth and development in developing countries, particularly focusing on rural and impoverished areas,” he said. He will also visit Cambodia while in Southeast Asia.

After graduation, Gavin hopes to teach English in South Korea for a year before taking the exam for the Foreign Service. He would eventually like to get a Ph.D. degree in international studies. His mother is Ann Martin, and stepfather is Richard Martin. His father is Dan Gavin, and stepmother is Pam Gavin.

Lawler, a retired marine biologist who died earlier this year, had designated the Education Foundation to administer the scholarship with a five-member scholarship committee. The scholarship funds learning or educational travel for ORHS students or graduates, with special consideration given to AFS students.

Lawler’s will included a bequest for \$174, 582 to the Education Foundation for the Dr. Adrian R. Lawler Exchange Student Scholarship Endowment.

Students attending Oak Ridge schools and graduates of ORHS currently attending college are eligible for the scholarship. The scholarship will not usually provide total funding, but instead encourage students to earn part of their funding as a life lesson.

The Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in 2000, provides funds beyond public tax dollars for education, raising funds through grants and private donations to invest in enhanced educational programming, innovative technology, and state-of-the-art facilities for teachers and students. For more information, see the foundation's web site at [www.orpsef.org](http://www.orpsef.org).