



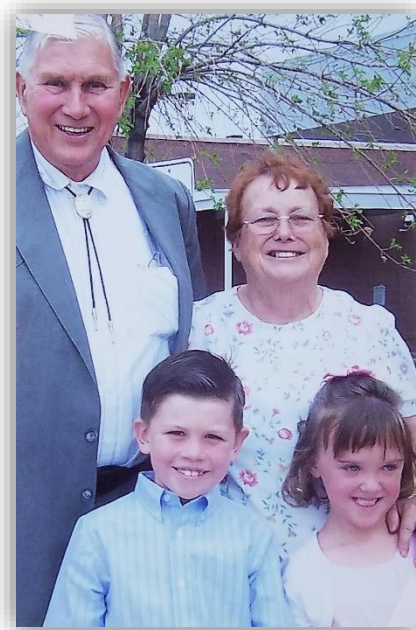
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## Student Spotlight

May 2017

### The DeWitt Family

Cochise, AZ



Helen DeWitt and her husband Dale were only married three days when three children were dropped off at their home to be under their care. They would be the first of many children – both biological and otherwise – that the DeWitts would provide a home of love and stability. Over the years, they had four biological children; one adopted child that was raised from birth in their home; and of the many children they fostered, five of them they eventually adopted as well. Two of their most recently adopted children – Anthony and Isabell – remain with Helen today and are recipients of scholarships from the AAA Scholarship Foundation. Both Anthony and Isabell had a rocky start in life, but with love and support from the DeWitts and the ability to learn in an environment suited to their needs, both children have been able to overcome their obstacles and thrive.

Anthony and Isabell, who are biological half siblings, both came into the DeWitt family's lives through the foster care system. Isabell, the younger of the two, was only 18 months old the first time she was placed with Helen and Dale, and would go back and forth between their home and biological relatives over the years. Anthony was five years old when he first came to live with the DeWitts, after being bounced between five different foster homes in his short life. After years of instability, both children were officially adopted by the DeWitts when Anthony was 7 years old and Isabell was 5 years old. They had finally found their forever home and the means to heal the wounds caused by their rough start in life. The next few years would not be without challenges, but as a family unit, they worked through it together.

One of the many hurdles they faced was Anthony's school environment. He had attended Kindergarten and first grade at the local public school, but when Helen learned of the bullying he was experiencing and related trouble

it was causing, she pulled both him and Isabell out and opted to homeschool them instead. The two had experienced enough in their young lives and she did not want them to experience further trauma in a school environment that would further delay their progress. With no other options, Helen continued to homeschool both children throughout elementary school.

However, a couple of years ago, a new school opened – Cochise SDA Christian School in Bisbee, Arizona – and Helen learned that her children would be able to attend school there with assistance from the AAA Scholarship Foundation under the Lexie’s Law program, which provides scholarships for eligible displaced (foster care) and disabled students. Although having her children attend Cochise SDA meant that Helen would be making an hour long commute each way, she felt the benefits they would receive at the school would far outweigh the sacrifices the family would make. She was right. With its small class sizes and close-knit environment, Cochise helped them transition from home school and expand their academic skills, develop new interests and further their musical talents, something that both children had become passionate about when they began singing in their church choir at a young age.

Anthony graduated from eighth grade at Cochise SDA in 2016, and was able to continue on to high school at Thunderbird Adventist Academy in Scottsdale with the continued help from a scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation. Due to the distance from his family home, Anthony dorms at the school and returns home once a month. Despite the separation from his family, Anthony continued to set his sights on success and take full advantage of the opportunities available to him at the school.

However, just as Anthony was starting his freshman year at Thunderbird and as Isabell was continuing on to eighth grade at Cochise SDA, the family encountered tragedy. Dale DeWitt, their adoptive father and the man who had raised them as his own alongside Helen, went into a coma following complications from back surgery. Sadly, he passed away in December 2016.

Losing their father took a toll out on both children. During her father’s final days, Isabell missed school and would spend hours reading and singing to him. Anthony fell behind in his studies as he worried about his father’s health and traveled back to be with his family during this difficult time. However, armed with the strength they provide each other, the family has been able to move forward and get back on track, taking it day by day.



Anthony is finishing up ninth grade at Thunderbird, which has provided him with new challenges and experiences to further his academic career. While his favorite subject is English and he continues his love of music through the school’s chorale program, he has also developed a wide range of other interests and is eager to explore all his options for the future. For example, he participated in a ride along with the Scottsdale Police Department, prompting him to consider pursuing a degree in criminal justice. He has also recently developed an interest in aviation, and hopes to participate in Thunderbird’s aviation program next year. And for the past few years, he has volunteered with a local television station in his hometown, gaining valuable experience in television

production and peaking his interest in a possible future career. In addition to his busy schedule during the school year, he also works in the school cafeteria to assist his family financially.



Isabell continues to excel at Cochise SDA, where she has developed a strong interest in English and writing and has furthered her love of music and art. In her spare time, in addition to singing, writing and drawing, she enjoys helping others, perhaps something she learned from experiencing Helen and Dale's giving spirits over the years. She regularly volunteers her time to help her neighbors with their animals and has also assisted with making quilts for charitable causes with her mom.

Both Anthony and Isabell had to overcome tremendous hurdles to get where they are today. They were faced with an uncertain future from the start, but Helen and Dale DeWitt gave them the opportunity to flourish in a loving and secure home. And with help from the AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors, they have been given access to educational tools that will enable them to take several steps further on a path towards a promising future.

### **About AAA Scholarship Foundation**

The AAA Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships solely to qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 85 percent of AAA scholarships are distributed to children at or below 185 percent of poverty. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a tax credit (dollar-for-dollar in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada, and up to 90 percent in Pennsylvania). The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved Scholarship 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students through these Scholarship Tax Credit programs. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit [www.AAAScholarships.org](http://www.AAAScholarships.org), or contact Kerri Vaughan at [kerri@aaascholarships.org](mailto:kerri@aaascholarships.org) or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.