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Astronomy student benefits from 'dream' soccer scholarship

25-year-old researcher sets sights on the stars

Courtesy of the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico

When Malynda Chizek was growing up in rural Iowa, she would look up into the night sky and dream of becoming an astronomer. Now at the age of 25, Chizek is watching her dream unfold as she attends New Mexico State University in pursuit of her Ph.D. in astronomy.

"I have been interested in physical science for as long as I can remember, especially astronomy because of the fantastic view of the night sky," Chizek said, noting the major benefits to continuing education. "I am pursuing my dream of becoming a professional astronomer, and I get to travel all over the world and make connections with other scientists doing research that's related to mine."

To help with the rising cost of tuition and expenses related to attending graduate school, Chizek applied for and received the Kevin T. Riedel Scholarship available through the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico — a scholarship that has personal, financial and

educational paybacks associated with it.

In 2004, Riedel was killed by a drunken driver while on his way to a soccer tournament in California. After Kevin's death, the Las Cruces Soccer Referee and High Noon Soccer associations created the Kevin T. Riedel Memorial Scholarship in an effort to keep Riedel's memory alive and provide financial support to students who need it. To be eligible for the scholarship, students must have a strong soccer background.

"I am happy to be receiving a scholarship in memory of someone who encouraged growth in soccer here in Las Cruces, and I hope to be able to add to the soccer community through my coaching and refereeing," Chizek said.

For Chizek, continuing her higher education presents its difficulties.

"Starting my professional life and continuing with soccer and other non-academic activities I enjoy can be a struggle," said Chizek, who decided to attend NMSU for her advanced studies following a summer internship in Socorro for the National Radio Astronomy



Malynda Chizek is congratulated by Las Cruces Soccer Referee Association President Bill Lindemann for receiving the Kevin T. Riedel Scholarship.

Observatory. "I thought New Mexico was a beautiful state and would be fun to live in, so I looked at the astronomy program here and found research opportunities here that I am interested in."

While in Las Cruces, Chizek continues to focus on the sport that made Riedel proud.

"I am involved with the soccer community in Las Cruces as an assistant coach with my cousin's soccer team in the High Noon Soccer League, and I also am a referee with High Noon and Mesilla Valley Soccer leagues," she said.

For more information on scholarships, visit www.cfsnm.org.

The Community Foundation of southern New Mexico is dedicated to helping the Southern New Mexico community now, and in the future. Founded in 2000, the CFSNM offers opportunities for local people who want to give back locally. The beauty of the foundation is that donors need not be wealthy to make a positive difference in the lives of people in our area. Through the establishment of permanent funds, donors can sustain local charitable organizations, provide scholarships to area students and fulfill wishes that are close to their heart. Through our planned giving programs, donors can honor loved ones or leave a legacy that benefits the people of southern New Mexico for generations to come. The CFSNM can advise donors on how best to maximize contributions, no matter what size.

