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St. Andrews student benefited from local scholarship support

At 18 years old, Mike Squillante was ready to move on to his next challenge after graduating with honors from Scotland High School.

However at 21 years of age, he was working a third-shift job and barely making ends meet. At that point, Squillante had few thoughts about pursuing a college degree. But that changed with some encouragement.

“Rev. Nick Mager, the former pastor at Laurinburg Presbyterian, said to me I should be in college,” remembered Squillante. “I told him I didn’t have any money and then I told St. Andrews the same thing. I told them I was broke.”

But the financial aid office at St. Andrews Presbyterian College worked on a support package for Squillante.

“There’s no way I could have paid for college. I don’t know anything about how the financial aid people worked it out,” said Squillante. “I referred to them as having a magic wand that they waved over my application and after waving it, they made it work.”

Squillante qualified for several sources of financial support including scholarships supported by the annual Laurinburg Area Campaign, the local fundraising effort to support the college, its programs and students. This year’s campaign goal is \$500,000.

One of the major scholarships awarded to Squillante was the Ina McNair Avinger Scholarship. This scholarship was set up by Laurinburg’s R.F. “Mutt” McCoy in 1997 through the Ina McNair Avinger Foundation Inc. Laurinburg area students who are involved with local churches are given priority for the scholarship.

“I would like to thank you for an opportunity to better my life,” wrote Squillante in a thank you note to McCoy in October of 2002. “This is only my first year in college but it is so refreshing. I graduated high school three years ago and have lived on my own without anybody’s help. It only took me one year to realize that the ‘real world’ is a cold place.”

Squillante’s thank you note then indicated his deep appreciation for the support of the Avinger Scholarship. He wrote, “You have given me some time to stop and look around at my options so that I might do something useful when I graduate.”

He made the most of the opportunity, earning a bachelor of arts degree last December after double majoring in visual arts and English. Squillante participated in commencement exercises last weekend at St. Andrews.

Squillante said his two greatest experiences at St. Andrews were meeting new friends and meeting his girlfriend, Chelsey Hughes. Squillante’s art was so impressive, he became one of two seniors asked to display their artwork at the Senior Art Show last fall.

“The art show gave a sense of completion, a sense of finality to my art degree,” he said. “For my English major, all I had to do was write a paper. For the art show, you’re working all

semester long, just pumping different pieces over and over again trying to weed out what's going to be shown to the public. So that's more pressure obviously."

When asked what he would like to say to McCoy and others who fund scholarships at St. Andrews, Squillante said, "I don't even know where to begin. The people who give are so great. To give that much money to someone you don't even know! That's amazing!"

"It may not be that much money to them, but to me, that's a lot of money. It's not just the money. It gives you a whole different opportunity in life. They're basically giving you a better position in life and that's just amazing."

About St. Andrews Presbyterian College

St. Andrews Presbyterian College is a four-year liberal arts and sciences college situated on 600 acres around a 70-acre lake in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. Long known for its innovation and academic excellence, the college boasts an unparalleled interdisciplinary curriculum, a study abroad program on three continents, a multidisciplinary science lab the size of an indoor arena, the first undergraduate college press in the country, the first four-year degree in therapeutic horsemanship and equine business management, and an award-winning bagpipe band. Students enrolled at St. Andrews come from 42 states and eleven countries.

Further information may be obtained by visiting the College's website www.sapc.edu or calling admissions at 800-763-0198 sending an e-mail to admissions@sapc.edu.



Mike Squillante adjusts his metal artwork entitled "Burnout" during last fall's senior art show at St. Andrews Presbyterian College.