
First scholarship winner now lawyer in St. Louis; cites family support for success



Anything is possible

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following story is the first in a series about past recipients of Maddox scholarships.*

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NEWS-SUN

A few days after being named the first Maddox Distinguished Scholar in 1996, Hobbsan Jill Doverspike felt overwhelmed by choices as to which college she'd attend.

A trip to the grocery store made her feel better.

"I was at the local grocery store and I think Sports Illustrated had published a top 10 sports schools in America, and I applied to all 10," she said. "Stanford, UCLA, University of Washington, Northwestern. And it was also nice because that kind of gave my parents the means to be able to visit some of these schools, so I could see for myself which one was the best fit."

Now 30, married and living in St.



Jill Doverspike Giorgio, the first Maddox Distinguished Scholar, stands with her husband, left, Herb Giorgio, and brother-in-law, Matt Giorgio.

Louis, Jill Doverspike goes by Jill Doverspike Giorgio. She works as a lawyer with the worldwide firm Bryan Cave and her husband, Herb Giorgio, is also a lawyer.

Regarding life in St. Louis, Giorgio said she likes how it's a "big small town."

"I get all the benefits of living in a big city, such as the athletic teams and the Broadway productions, the malls, but it's nice here in that everyone seems to know their neighbors and grew up together, so it definitely reminds me of home," she said.

Speaking with a self-assured voice, Giorgio recalled which premier sports school became her No. 1 choice — the University of Notre Dame.

Being the first Maddox Distinguished Scholar meant Giorgio would have a full ride to the Catholic university in Notre Dame, Ind., where one in

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five freshman applicants are accepted.

College dreams

Before August 1996, Notre Dame was not even on Giorgio's radar screen.

"I enjoy sports, and so it was important for me to choose a college that had a rich history of both athletics and intramural," she said.

Giorgio, who played intramural soccer in college, noted she appreciated how Notre Dame had intramural football for women and that the championship game was played at Notre Dame Stadium.

Giorgio graduated from Notre Dame in 2001 with a Bachelor's of Science in science business.

"I loved it," she said about the university. "Loved the school, loved the experience."

In recalling the experience of her daughter visiting Notre Dame for the first time, Janie Pape of Hobbs became nostalgic.

"The minute she walked off the Notre Dame campus, she knew it was the place she wanted to be," Pape said. "I think it was actually snowing, and we had never seen that big of snowflakes in our life. They'd hit you in the eye and they were just huge, and all the kids were out on the quads between the dorms were having snowball fights and everything. It's just an amazing place."

As for whether the Maddox scholarship made her feel more obligated to do well in college and beyond, Giorgio said without a doubt.

"Absolutely. ... I certainly felt an obligation to make (the Maddox Foundation) proud and represent them well and the county well," she said.

Career minded

After graduation, Giorgio knew she'd eventually attend law school, but she wanted to gain work experience first. She moved to Phoenix and worked for then Attorney General Janet Napolitano as the elder affairs coordinator in the State of Arizona's consumer fraud division.

In her second year on the job, Giorgio started applying to law schools and settled on St. Louis University. She graduated in 2006 with a Juris Doctorate and joined Bryan Cave, working as a finance and real estate lawyer who focuses primarily on domestic and international real estate transactions. The firm has about 1,000 attorneys worldwide.

"I describe what I do as happy law," Giorgio said, adding her firm usually represents a bank or lender.

Some of Giorgio's cases have included the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy and the naming rights of Citi Field, the new Mets stadium.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It's pretty cool when you get to see your work on the front page of the New York Times."

Giorgio, however, swiftly changes the subject, saying she realizes the Maddox scholarship is what set her on her path. Prior to Maddox, Giorgio's range of schools was somewhat limited because cost was an issue.

"I'm forever grateful to them," she said. "I do believe the scholarship did change the course of my life. When your only concern with going to college is whether or not you can get into that school, that opens so many more doors for you. I think Notre Dame was definitely the first step in that — it's a place I continue to love, it's where I met my husband, it's probably why I'm back in the Midwest now.

"Overall, it gave me so many more opportunities I probably would not have had."

Pape agreed the Maddox scholarship made a tremendous difference.

"She would not have been able to do the things she did unless she had gotten that scholarship," Pape said. "We could have sent her to college, but it wouldn't have been a major university like Notre Dame. The bill was over \$120,000 and that was totally free. It was just amazing."

Because the Maddox Distinguished Scholarship is awarded in July prior to the students' senior year, Pape said it gives the student an opportunity to apply to schools they may have never considered.

Sense of community

Everyone is a product of their past, and Giorgio said the sense of community in Lea County probably had a major effect on her character.

"Lea County is the kind of place where not only do you know everyone in your town, but you know people in Jal and Lovington and you grow up with those people," she said. "And your families have grown up with their families. There's a lot of pride and a lot of sense of belonging there."

Her appreciation of community has been expressed in some of her decisions, Giorgio said. One of the reasons she chose Notre Dame was the university's medium size — 8,372 undergraduates — and one of the reasons she picked St. Louis was its moderate size.

Many in Hobbs, Giorgio added, are probably familiar with her family. Her grandfather, Gil Haugen, was a basketball announcer at Hobbs High School. Her grandmother, Jean Haugen, was a teacher at Hobbs High. Her father, Jack Doverspike, lives in New Orleans.

Giorgio said her family deserves the most credit for what she became.

"My mom never missed one of my soccer games and was always there supporting me," Giorgio said. "They're the ones who basically gave me my drive and always told me that really anything is possible. And it was with their encouragement that I initially applied for this scholarship, and I've had their support ever since."

For Giorgio, success has been a gradual process rather than a eureka moment.

"Even when I applied for the scholarship, I had made mistakes before applying for the scholarship, and I think a part of making those mistakes is the maturity and the learning process that comes from them," she said.

Giorgio said the fact she spoke honestly with the Maddox Foundation about her mistakes may have helped.

"Ever since then, of course, it hasn't been easy the entire way, but you kind of learn as you go," she said.