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Eva Gunther Foundation

Final Letter from Shea Ellison

During July, I attended the young women's writing and college preparation programs at Smith College in North Hampton, Massachusetts. For 2 weeks I attended morning workshops with acclaimed novelist Terra Mcvoy and poetry classes in the afternoon. Mrs. Mcvoy gave us daily writing exercises to complete and share with the class. We also had to write our own short story by the end of the program, share it with the class, and listen to their critiques. This was the first time I had ever written my own story without it being required or affecting my grade in school.

For my afternoon class, we were given writing prompts and required to write poems and share them after we wrote each of them. When I first started, I did not enjoy this class because I did not enjoy sharing my work. It made me nervous and I did not think my work was good enough. By the end of two weeks, I had to workshop my final pieces, and found that when I began to read, it came naturally. I got great feedback on my work and I learned more about myself as a writer. I know that everyone gets nervous and in the end, the quality of my work is more important than how nervous I am in presenting it.

For my third week, I completed a college admissions workshop. This was a lot more difficult because in each class I was faced with the harsh reality that college was very soon. We were instructed on how to write an interesting college essay and how to

conduct a successful college interview. It actually helped me feel like the task will be more manageable when I prepare next year.

Attending these workshops gave me a taste for what college life will be like. I had to complete assignments on my own time, on top of having work in both classes. I spent multiple nights in my dorm room brainstorming with friends on what to write about for the final assignments, and spent hours working on my college essay and my final fiction story for my writing class. Completing these assignments showed me that I am more capable of applying myself than I thought. As I continue to complete out of state programs in the summer, I am becoming more aware of who I am as a person. I am very social and love to meet new friends, and even though I like a lot of people, I also get nervous when meeting new people. On the first day of camp, I had no friends, but I knew that I did not want to complete the program without meeting girls and making memories with them over the three weeks. As a result, I introduced myself to all of the girls in my “house” and forced myself to open myself up to them. By the end of the first week, I was completely adjusted to the college dorm environment and was spending my free time at the lake or going to the gym with some of the girls.

This summer experience was different than any other I have had. There was a lot more work involved but it was overall more beneficial for me. I learned how to apply myself to my work, even if I wanted to go out to town with friends instead. I have a better idea of what college will be like and I have learned how I behave when meeting and working with new people. I would love to continue to travel, meet new people, and expand my comfort zone as I mature and grow older. I also came home with a conviction that I want to study Film and Cinematography. I am a good photographer, and I think I

can combine my love of storytelling with my love of photography. Already, I'm thinking about jobs that I might get one day when I'm an adult. I look at the credits for tv shows and think that someday my name will be up there.

Thank you for making it possible for me to have this experience, and accomplishing all that I did.

Sincerely,

Shea Ellison