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FEATURED

Bardstown student selected for West Point

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BHS student Reagan Phelps poses for a photo with her certificate of appointment from West Point in February.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

Bardstown High School’s Reagan Phelps continues to go above and beyond in pursuit of purpose due in part to her recent acceptance of appoint to the U.S. Military

Academy at West Point. In her senior year at Gatton Academy at Western Kentucky University, she said she owes all her next steps to her time at the school.

“I don’t think I would have even tried to apply if I hadn’t gone to Gatton Academy, because I started studying Russian when I went to Gatton,” Phelps said. “That kind of got me interested in doing something in the field of government or international politics or something where I can use Russian in my daily life. I decided around my junior year, so like around over a year ago, I wanted to apply to West Point and I wanted to try it.”

Currently, Phelps studies in the STEM+ Critical Language Program, which she studies Russian. She also had her first trip

abroad with the National Security Language Initiative for Youth Scholarship in Estonia during the summer between her junior and senior year.

Phelps said the process of getting into West Point was challenging in its own way, from her time failing the physical exam to obtaining an endorsement from a U.S. congressman.

“About the fitness test thing most people don’t get a second chance to take their fitness test,” she said. “It’s very rare to get two chances to retake it. I was so so so worried that they were going to email me again and say ‘Sorry, it didn’t work out again. The process is over.’ So when I got that call, I was just so relieved.”

U.S. Representative Brett Guthrie was the person to endorse Phelps to the military academy. When visiting her to deliver the recommendation in person, Guthrie said, “Reagan Phelps is the kind of person who can absolutely excel in our program because [she’s] proven that [she] can. She seemed to

really be someone that wants to be a leader — to lead men and women — and that’s what it’s all about.

Despite the anxieties prior to her appointment, Phelps said it is an overwhelming sense of accomplishment she feels now. She added that when her family heard the news they were all excited for her and remarked that her mom even cried tears of joy.

Looking ahead Phelps said she still feels the same drive she did when she first applied. She said she wants to immerse herself where she can apply her skills every day, as well expand on her drive for government and international politics.

“I always knew that I wanted to learn some sort of critical language thing that like you know, it’s qualified by the government as critical language because they’re supposed to be really difficult,” she said.

“It’s supposed to be really good for the job field and I just wanted to give it to try and Gatton Academy has this program where you

can study Arabic, Chinese or Russian and I kind of almost on a whim picked Russian because I'd always thought that it was interesting. It sounded like very cool language to learn. Yeah, absolutely fell in love with the culture and just the process of studying it.”

Phelps said over the next few months she will continue to train to prepare her for her lengthy commitment to the U.S. military. After her four years at West Point, she will have five years of active duty in the U.S. Army and three years in the Army Reserves. Despite the time commitment, Phelps said she is prepared to take it all on eagerly.

“For a while I was scared of that big commitment, the five years after my four years of studying, but honestly, the way I think of it is it's a guaranteed job that I know I'm going to enjoy after I graduate,” she said. “I'm excited for it ... and I'm planning on majoring in Russian at West Point, so I'm guaranteed, I think, to have some kind of ability to work with Russian every day.”

Phelps said she encourages others to seek out opportunities to continue to pursue your passions. She said she was certain she would never get into West Point, but it glad she pushed herself.

“I think a lot of people don’t try, I guess, to apply to big schools like West Point because they’re kind of told it’s very difficult to get in; especially if you’re someone like me who’s never done sports or are a very academic oriented person,” she said. “I think it’s important for people to know that you don’t have to be like the quarterback of the football team to get into a school at West Point. That’s one thing to just try.”