



Shiv Patel is focused on finding and understanding his strengths in a team-building activity with the other finalists during the Leadership Weekend in Chicago.

Helping Elks Build Stronger Communities

The Top of the Class

EVERY SCHOLAR has a story, and one of the goals of the Most Valuable Student Leadership Weekend is to get to the heart of those stories; to understand how 20 incredibly talented, gifted and driven students traveled paths that intertwined in Chicago where they'd vie for the opportunity to earn \$50,000 toward their college experience.

This year's class is full of future doctors, scientists and engineers who are going to change the world. By the end of the weekend, the top male and female scholars were chosen: Shiv Patel, sponsored by Roxboro, N.C., Lodge No. 2005, and Maitland Thull, sponsored by Mobile, Ala., Lodge No. 108. These are their stories.

Shiv was raised in North Carolina. His life changed when his father was diagnosed with progressive supranuclear palsy. Unfortunately, Shiv's father lost his battle with the disease.

Earning the top scholarship lightens the financial burden of sending Shiv and his brother to college. Shiv will study global health on the medical track at Northwestern University in the fall.

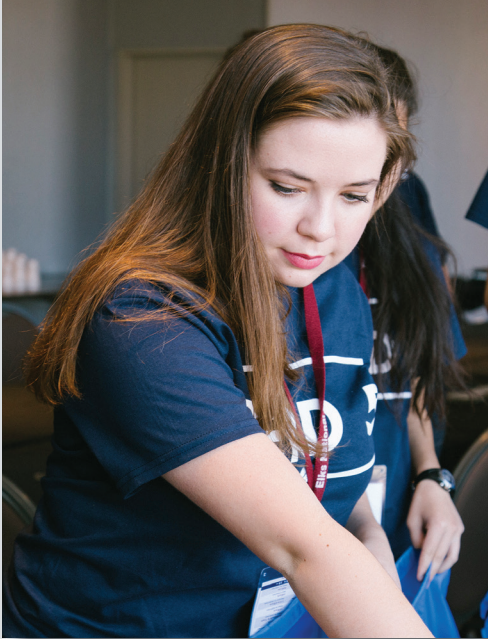
Like Shiv, Maitland's story is one of fierce determination, in herself and in her mother. Four years ago, Maitland's mother was diagnosed with viral head and neck cancer. Watching her mother fight and beat cancer three times has made Maitland the independent, mature and focused person she is today.

Maitland finds joy in flying, a hobby she began at age 11 with her grandfather. She will attend the University of Alabama in Huntsville to study aerospace engineering and public health policy.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart," Maitland says. "Your investment in my future has been so encouraging to myself, my family and those who have supported me so far. I can't thank you enough."

No matter where their stories take them next, one thing is for certain: Shiv and Maitland will always have their #ElksFamily beside them.

Visit enf.elks.org/2018TopMVS to learn more about Maitland and Shiv.



Maitland Thull helps pack hygiene kits for veterans before heading out with the other finalists to volunteer at the Jesse Brown V.A. Medical Center in Chicago.



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David Ma (from left), Pearl Zhang, Aleah Hahn and Timothy Ho are in high spirits as they make their way through the Jesse Brown V.A. Medical Center to distribute hygiene kits and spend time with veterans.

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MVS Scholars Saw the Signs

“I’ll be taking home more than just a scholarship—friendships, networking opportunities, and being a part of the Elks organization.”

AS THE PLANE descended from the sky and the scholars made their way through the airport doors, a “Welcome to Chicago!” banner greeted them in the entryway. On the way to their luggage, a “Welcome Elks Scholars” sign held by a friendly face told them they were in the right place for the fifth annual Most Valuable Student Leadership Weekend.

There might as well have been a third sign at the hotel for the event: “Welcome Home.” The scholars bonded quickly through their ambition, goals and drive to succeed. They spent the first night getting to know one another, and themselves, through a series of leadership activities.

“I had the best time learning more about my strengths while simultaneously growing in my leadership skills,” says Ellie Gex, sponsored by Katy, Texas, Lodge No. 2628.

These activities also helped prepare the scholars for a video interview and an in-person interview with the national judges for the top scholarships. Like many of the scholars, Natalie MacEwan, sponsored by Canoga Park, Calif., Lodge No. 2190, shared stories from her life that show the importance of the Most Valuable Student scholarship. To Natalie, it means people believe in her.

“I knew I was going to be extremely inspired after this weekend, and I’ll be taking home more than just a scholarship—friendships, networking opportunities,

and being a part of the Elks organization,” Natalie says.

The scholars also served together at the Jesse Brown V.A. Medical Center in Chicago. Maitland Thull sponsored by Mobile, Ala., Lodge No. 108, had an unforgettable experience singing “Happy Birthday” to a World War II veteran who was soon turning 97.

“It was amazing that we got to be in that place with that man,” Maitland says. “I feel like we did such a tiny dent in the scope of veterans...but keep doing that dent over and over again, and it gets bigger, and that’s encouraging.”

The weekend ended with a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan to celebrate the scholars and their new beginnings. The future is bright with these students leading the charge, and this weekend wouldn’t be possible without the support of the Elks.

“[Leadership Weekend] was truly transformative because I learned so much about myself and how to relate to others,” says Bob Schofner, sponsored by Brandon, Fla., Lodge No. 2383. “I am very honored and grateful to be selected as one of the Finalists.”

For 2018-19, the Elks National Foundation allocated \$2.9 million to fund the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, which includes 500 four-year scholarships ranging from \$4,000 to \$50,000. For more information about the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, including eligibility and deadlines, visit enf.elks.org/MVS.



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