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North Ed Career Tech Student Recognized as Outstanding Michigan Student

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – Overcoming a number of challenges in the African village where she grew up, including the death of her parent at just 8 years old, Tioloman Traore’s drive to obtain an education is likely a part of the reason she was recognized as one of this year’s Outstanding Michigan Students by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s office.

“This is undoubtedly a major accomplishment, and it’s clear that you are a valued member of your school and community,” a letter from Gov. Whitmer to Traore states. “To be nominated as an Outstanding Michigan Student means that you have shown exceptional skill and leadership throughout your school. I want you to know that you have infinite potential and talent to grow into a leader of our state. I look forward to seeing the many positive differences you will make in your community as a passionate, motivated, and talented student.”

Traore, a recent graduate of Traverse City Central and Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech, was also invited to participate in a virtual roundtable this week with members of the Governor’s team and other student leaders from across the state – in part because of her memorable tale.

“Tioloman’s journey is a truly remarkable story of what it means to pursue a dream and persevere through adversity,” said Pat Lamb, North Ed’s assistant superintendent of Career and Technical Education. “Many of us would have a difficult time leaving behind our family and everything we knew growing up to obtain an education in another part of the world, but that is exactly what Tioloman has done. She has tirelessly pursued her dream of gaining an education and the opportunity to make a better life for herself, and I am confident that she will be successful in whatever she chooses to do.”

Traore has been accepted at Western Michigan University for the fall 2022 semester and will pursue a nursing degree. Her lived experiences and her desire to work in nursing, specifically hospice care, clearly indicate her passion for helping others.

At just 8 years old while living in Africa, Traore watched her mother pass away from cancer at home, an up-close-and-personal account of the heartbreak that can result due to the limited access to health care in the village where she lived. Later, her grandmother had hoped she would

drop out of school and get married, but Traore was set on getting an education and she made the difficult decision to travel by train to a refugee camp and wait for the opportunity to be adopted.

It took two years for Traore to finally immigrate to the U.S., where she entered Traverse City Central as a 9th-grader who could read and write in French. She has since mastered four languages, and receives tutoring in English.

Her experiences in Africa and the loss of her mother fueled Traore's desire to pursue a nursing career, and she joined North Ed Career Tech's Health Sciences program as a junior, earning several academic honors at her local school and Career Tech during her years in high school.

In addition to academics, Traore participated in high school Cross Country and has volunteered for a local food pantry and local athletic events like the "Ironman" Triathlon. She also serves as a "Big Sister" for other African children who may be feeling alone or in need of support.

Career Tech leadership submitted a letter to the state this spring, urging the Governor's Office to recognize Traore for her accomplishments.

"Tioloman instinctively knew from an early age that to overcome obstacles in completing her education she would need to leave her country, culture and family to fulfill her dream," the letter states. "Tioloman is certainly an inspiration to staff and students alike. Tioloman has accomplished so much in the four years that she has been in the United States, and without question is a worthy recipient of the 'Outstanding Michigan Student' award."

North Ed Career Tech offers 21 career and technical education programs to high school juniors and seniors in the counties of Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau. For more information, high schoolers can talk with their school's guidance counselors or visit www.NorthwestEd.org/career_tech/.

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