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June 19, 2007

Millennium scholar earns doctorate

**by Heather Swanson
For the Nevada Appeal**

June 2, 2007

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Carson High School graduate Emily Maier received her doctorate Friday earning a Ph.D. in pharmacy from the University of Southern Nevada in Henderson. At the age of 22 she is the youngest in her class, and one of the first Millennium scholars, to do so.

Maier graduated from Carson High in 2002 at age 17 and began her university studies at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she majored in biochemistry. Two years into the course she applied to the pharmacy program at the University of Southern Nevada and was accepted despite her lack of a bachelor's degree.

Starting so young was difficult at first, Maier admitted when reached at her home in Las Vegas, where she lives with her fiancé, Chris Hightower.

"I felt like I was totally out of place and just a baby," she said.

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Cameron Haymond/University of Southern Nevada photo 2002 Carson High School graduate Emily Maier receives her doctorate from Harry Rosenberg, president of the University of Southern Nevada in Henderson, on Friday. Leaving with a Ph.D. in

Cameron Haymond/University of Southern Nevada photo 2002 Carson High School graduate Emily Maier received her doctorate from the University of Southern Nevada in Henderson on Friday. Leaving with a Ph.D. in pharmacy at the age of 22 she is the youngest in her class, and one of the first Millennium scholars to earn such a high degree.

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The three-year accelerated program ran year-round and was demanding, according to Maier, who says she had to receive a 90 percent or higher on all exams just to pass.

"This program is just so intense," she said.

Maier says she's looking forward to starting work.

"I'm excited to get out and start working; it feels like it's been a lot of school," she said.

The young pharmacist has already received job offers, though she says she's waiting on the results of a clinical spot she applied for to make any decisions. Maier says she plans to stay in Nevada where pharmacists are sorely needed.

She admits her life would likely be drastically different if she hadn't been a recipient of the Millennium Scholarship.

The Millennium Scholarship offers students \$2,500 a year to attend a Nevada state school. Without it, Maier says it's doubtful she'd now be receiving her Ph.D., engaged to one of her classmates (Hightower, a native of San Clemente, Calif., is also a pharmacist), with long-term plans of staying in the state.

"I was looking at other schools," she said, noting she'd planned to study out-of-state. "I wasn't intending on going to UNR; the scholarship definitely influenced my decision."

She added, "There wouldn't have been any reason to come back for pharmacy,

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if I even did pharmacy."

She is the daughter of Jo and Bill Maier of Carson City. Jo Maier works at the Ron Wood Family Resource Center. Bill Maier is deputy director of the Nevada Department of Business and Industry.

"We're extremely proud of her, for her to have accomplished so much," Jo Maier said when asked about her daughter. "She has a very bright future and we have a great need for people in our state to take on these harder things."

What is it?

The Millennium Scholarship was created in 2000 and is funded by a settlement Nevada receives from tobacco companies.

More than 40,000 students have taken advantage of the funding, accessing \$125.9 million in aid. Limited funding has caused state legislators to tighten requirements for the scholarship.

Grade-point average requirements are now at 3.25 for seniors, an increase from 3.0 when it began. Graduates have six years to access the scholarship money, down from the original eight.

Students must maintain a 2.6 GPA the first year at college and a 2.75 after that to keep the scholarship, up from the original 2.0. Successful candidates are provided with up to \$2,500 per year for up to four years at any of several Nevada universities.

For more information on the Millennium Scholarship visit <http://nevadatreasurer.gov/millennium/>.

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