

Danville High student now a Golden Apple Scholar

By [Noelle McGee](#)

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Rick Danzl

Danville High School senior Kelsey Thurman was named a 2009 Illinois Golden Apple Scholar.

DANVILLE – Kelsey Thurman won't start college until the fall, but she'll get a jump start preparing for her career this summer.

The Danville High School senior was named a 2009 Illinois Golden Apple Scholar today. The highly competitive program recruits and prepares Illinois high school and college students for successful teaching careers in high-need schools around the state.

"I've wanted to be a teacher since I was little," Thurman said, adding she was inspired by her teachers. "It's really exciting. I think it's going to be a great opportunity."

This year, the Golden Apple Foundation – which also presents the Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching to teachers – received more than 1,850 nominations for the scholar program. Thurman was one of the 100 students selected.

Scholars will be honored on May 2 at DePaul University's Lincoln Park campus in Chicago.

The largest pre-service teacher support program in the nation, the Golden Apple organization provides scholars with financial assistance to attend one of 53 public and private universities across the state – \$2,500 a year the first two years, and \$5,000 a year the last two years. Scholars also attend summer institutes, for which they receive a \$2,000 stipend each year, and are mentored by Golden Apple Award-winning teachers once they start teaching.

In return, scholars must agree to teach for five years in an Illinois school of need, which serve low-income students or have below-par test scores.

Thurman, 18, is the daughter of Kristal Arnholt of Danville, and Rick Thurman of Covington, Ind. She plans to study education at the University of Illinois and teach third and fourth grade or high school English and literature.

She first heard about the program two years ago when she wrote about wanting to be a teacher. Her American literature teacher told her she should apply for the program, which is precisely what she did when it came time to filling out college scholarship applications.

The application process was lengthy and rigorous, and required Thurman to write seven essays on topics such as her favorite teacher, the qualities a teacher should have, diversity and how she views success. "It took me a month to finish," said Kelsey, who had to interview on Eastern Illinois University's campus once she made it past the first phase.

Danville High guidance counselor Kelli Simpkins knew that Thurman would see it through. "What most impresses me about Kelsey is her perseverance, and the way she embraces challenges and her creative approach to a situation. Her work ethic is incredible."

Because of that, Simpkins said Thurman will be an asset to the teaching profession. "She will not give up on her students. No matter how tough the situation, she'll help them find a way to achieve. That's Kelsey."

Thurman is eager to be heading to DePaul for five weeks this summer where she'll spend half the day in classes, and the other half interning in Chicago public schools. "That's where I want to teach for at least three years" said Thurman, who also is considering returning to Danville in the future. "I just think education is a huge door opener and an equalizer with race and gender. I want them to know they have a future and can do anything they set their mind to."

"It's going to be a great opportunity for her," said Danville High language arts teacher Shauna Oakwood, who was a scholar in 2003 and, therefore, able to give Thurman some advice on the interview. "She's going to be so much better prepared. And it's just nice because you get to meet a lot of other people who will be doing the same thing you're going to do."

The program also provides networking opportunities and job search assistance.

"I definitely think it will help me get a job," Thurman said.

"When they see it on my resume, I think they'll know I'm committed and hardworking ... and that I'm never going to stop learning about teaching. It's an ongoing process."

On the Web

For a full list of the 2009 Illinois Golden Apple Scholars and to learn more about the program, go to www.goldenapple.org.

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