



From CHICAGO GRADE SCHOOLER *to* UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR:

How the Union League Boys & Girls Club Helped Make One Journey Possible



Star Brooks doesn't play golf. But years ago she learned, with help from the Union League Boys & Girls Club, how the game might change her life.

As a Chicago Public School second grader Star joined the Club, where she received homework help, had access to computer labs, and joined various summer programs. "I heard about it and begged my Dad to sign me up," she said.

The Club has been part of her life ever since. It assisted Star and helped her receive a Daniel Murphy scholarship to Chicago's Holy Trinity High School and helped again when she applied for and was awarded an Evans Scholarship, a four-year full tuition and housing college scholarship awarded to caddies. And the Club continues to support Star with an ongoing, separate scholarship.

Star demonstrated her willingness to work hard to receive those scholarships. But she readily admits she didn't achieve those

goals alone. "The Boys & Girls Club aided me in so much of my success that if I take away the Boys & Girls Club, it would put me back so many steps," she said.

Her personal drive is evident to those who've met her. "She was very future focused and wanted to make sure she was putting her best foot forward academically, socially, and in all areas to make sure she was aligning herself with hopefully getting the Evans Scholarship," said Kara Chin, a director at the Western Golf Association, which in 1930 established the Evans Scholars Foundation and currently oversees the caddy scholarship program.

GOLF?

Charles Evans was an excellent golfer in the 1920s but chose not to play full-time professional golf. He took what prize money he won in tournaments and set it aside in hopes of helping caddies attend college. Along with the Western Golf Association, Evans established in 1930, what is today

the nation's largest scholarship program for caddies.

Many Evans scholars play golf and are familiar with the game--and caddying. Not Star. "I did not know what caddying was. I was a softball player and I knew how to swing a bat, but that's the closest thing I knew about swinging a golf club," she said.

What she did know, however, is that caddies demonstrating academic excellence, financial need, and strong personal character could apply for an Evans Scholarship. Currently about 1,070 scholars are enrolled in 21 universities around the country.

"I was going to have some money and my foot in the door to get the scholarship," she said of her caddying experience. "Not every kid in Humboldt Park knows of these opportunities," she said of growing up in her Chicago neighborhood.

Union League Boys & Girls Club Trustee John Lemker said when he was awarded

an Evans Scholarship in the 1950s several other scholarship winners didn't play the game either, or play much. But other elements of the program have changed over the years. "One of the big differences was that in those days we didn't have any women scholarship winners," he said.

Star started caddying six days a week at Skokie Country Club in the Chicagoland area as a high school freshman. Western Golf Association staff kept in touch with Star throughout her high school academic years, checking on her grades and overall well-being.

So did Union League Boys & Girls Club Senior Vice President Hector Perez, who helped Star collect letters of recommendation for the college scholarship process "and made sure the application was whole before sending it in," she said.

She was also building relationships back at school. Holy Trinity trustee Ray Milnes

pushed Star toward the Evans Scholarship, checking in with her to make sure her application was moving along. He attended her basketball games. "There was something about this guy," said Star's dad, Ronald.

NEXT STEPS

Star applied to more than a dozen colleges during the winter of her senior year, but a critical element of her chance to attend college came the following February, when she received a letter announcing she'd been selected to receive an Evans Scholarship, Class of 2023. Today, Star attends the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is on her way to earning undergraduate and master's degrees simultaneously. She's also co-president of the student-run Sports Business Association.

The Club continues to offer help to Star when it can. Before her university classes began, Star needed a new personal com-

puter and called the Club for advice on where she could find a good deal. Hector Perez didn't give her a shopping recommendation, he handed her a new laptop. "My Dad and I didn't expect anything like that. But Hector is the kind of guy who when he says, 'Let me handle this,' he'll do that and then some," Star said.

And the Union League Boys & Girls Club has extended to Star another scholarship to help her meet expenses not covered by her university scholarship.

Star is working to maintain her grades, which are excellent, and looks forward to graduating from college in a few years. "We've got to go a little further," Ronald Brooks said about his daughter's push for her college degrees. But he's proud of what Star has achieved to date.

"I certainly am. She helps me and I help her. We're a team."

To learn more about how you can support the Union League Boys & Girls Club, visit <https://ulbgc.org>

To learn more about the Evans Scholarship Foundation: www.wgaesf.org.



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