



Everything Michigan

## Roger B. Chaffee Memorial Scholarship winner wants to populate the moon

By Rick Wilson | The Grand Rapids Press

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GRAND RAPIDS -- Kathryn Luczek's career goals may sound like something out of science fiction, but when you hear them, it's easy to buy in.

The 18-year-old senior at Grand Rapids Catholic Central High School is the 2010 winner of the Roger B. Chaffee Memorial Scholarship, among the most prestigious awards available to students in Kent County.

Luczek is headed to the University of Michigan, where she plans to major in aeronautical and astronautical engineering, and then consider a space research career.

"I love the concept of space and astrophysics because there's just so much we don't know and so much empty space out there," Luczek said.

"I want to set up a lunar colony and do research that could send more people into space, because one day there's not going to be enough room for all the people on Earth."

The \$2,500 Chaffee award goes annually to a top graduating senior planning a career in engineering, math or the sciences relating to space technology.

Chaffee, with astronauts Edward White and Virgil "Gus" Grissom, died in 1967 in a launching pad flash fire during a pre-flight test of Apollo 1. Chaffee's family, friends and Grand Rapids Central High classmates established the award that year.

Scholarship officials say it was not only Luczek's top academic scores that put her over the top -- she has a 4.427 GPA -- but also glowing recommendations from teachers who cited her creative problem-solving.

Leigh Eriks, who teaches her advanced placement physics and pre-engineering classes, said Luczek is always game to see what more she can learn.

"When she sits down to take an AP physics test, a lot of students go into panic mode. But Kathryn just has this smile on her face like, "Yeah, let me have it, let's see what I can learn."

Luczek will receive her award tonight at a dinner in her honor, with Brian Kwapil, vice president of the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum in New York City, as the speaker.

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Kathryn Luczek, a senior at Grand Rapids Catholic Central, is this year's Robert B. Chaffee Scholarship Award winner. "I would like to populate the moon," Luczek said. She will attend The University of Michigan next fall to study aeronautical engineering.