

Pride Award Winner Lucy Blevins (SAS'18) Will Pursue a Master's Degree in Public Affairs and Social Work, with a Focus on Prison Reform

Lucy Blevins with Jeffrey Armus, Chairman of the Pride Award Committee and Vice President of the LAA. Photo by Qiumei Wang, Rutgers Business School Alumni Association. 

Lucy Anne Blevins (SAS'18), an aspiring social worker from Maplewood, New Jersey, has been named as the 2018 recipient of the Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award, given by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) of Rutgers University.

Blevins will graduate from Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences (New Brunswick) in May 2018. Starting in summer 2018 she will pursue a dual master's degree in Public Affairs and Social Work, with a focus on prison reform policy, at the University of Texas at Austin.

In her award application essay, Blevins noted that social work ties together several of the courses she took in other subjects at Rutgers.

"Through these classes, I realized that there was a theme to all my papers and projects: in psychology, I was interested in the effect of oppression on the soul; in art history, I focused on representations of struggle and creativity as an antidote to depression; in sociology, I was drawn to inequalities based on race and gender; and my favorite writing class explored non-western feminist authors throughout history.

"This seeming patchwork seemed something of a mess, until I took my first course in social work. Then they all fit together. I immediately saw that what I wanted was an education that would allow me to advocate for social justice, equal treatment, humane conditions, and basic human rights for all. I began to seek out opportunities that would allow me to have an impact on the community around me."

Blevins is a member of Omega Phi Alpha, the national service sorority. During her college career she has undertaken several community service initiatives, including: serving in local soup kitchens; advocating for mental health awareness on campus and global women's rights initiatives; and participating in the Rutgers Dance Marathon to raise funds for and to build meaningful

relationships with the families of children who have cancer and blood disorders.

Lucy Blevins, center, with her mother, Juliette Blevins, and her sister, Rebecca Blevins. Photo by Qiumei Wang, Rutgers Business School Alumni Association.

In her junior and senior years of college, Blevins has served along with several other Rutgers students as a tutor for inmates at New Jersey's Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, as part of their work with the Petey Greene Program.

Blevins has tutored the inmates in math, science, history, and writing. "More important than any educational skill that I have, I am able to help the inmates by listening to their thoughts and concerns as well as simply providing empowerment in the form of re-validation," she wrote in her Pride Award essay. "I have faith in the students that I tutor and believe that they are capable beyond their own ability to see. While they may be physically incarcerated, their minds and spirits are free and flourish with attention and compassion. ... One memory that always makes me smile is of working with a student and explaining to him how to read a Punnett square. 'This comes up on every GED practice exam, and I never understood it. Now I get it. Thank you, Lucy.' "

During her undergraduate career, Blevins earned several academic scholarships, and affiliated with the Douglass Residential College, a women's college within Rutgers.

The Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award has been given annually since 1990 by the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) to the Rutgers-New Brunswick graduating senior who most embodies the spirit of Livingston College and its attributes of leadership and social action. Livingston College is a former undergraduate college of Rutgers which was merged into the School of Arts and Sciences in 2007.

Riki E. Jacobs (1957-2009) was the director of the Hyacinth Foundation, an AIDS support organization, among many roles she fulfilled to assist vulnerable populations, and also was one of LAA's first Livingston College Distinguished Alumni, honored in 2000.