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**Barton Serves as Student Speaker at Northwestern College’s 111th Commencement!**

**[Bridgeview, Chicago-Jefferson Park & Rosemont, IL]** Northwestern College conducted its 111th Commencement Ceremony at the Arie Crown Theater at McCormick Place in Chicago. This year’s ceremony featured two students who addressed their class, including Valedictorian Alex Barton of Chicago and Elizabeth Rivera of McKinley Park. Barton majored in Criminal Justice while Rivera was a double-major in Business Administration and Executive Accounting.

Focusing on Barton, her journey to college commencement was not an easy one. She had attended Kennedy High School in Chicago but dropped out before graduating due to her parents moving. While her goal in life back then was to always strive to make a difference while at the same time being productive in life, it was a year before she was able to obtain her GED. Once that was under her belt, she was able to pursue a college education at the age of 20.

Barton was born and raised in Chicago. Her family was “not your ordinary family” but she was raised to be independent, living alongside her two sisters and brother until she was 15 years old. At 13 years of age her parents had divorced; she lived with her mother for a little while until she moved out and supported herself.

Living on her own, self-employed fixing computers, Barton came to Northwestern College to pursue her higher education. Although she had a two year scholarship to another college, she chose to attend Northwestern College because it was a convenient location. In the fall of 2013 she entered the College’s Criminal Justice program. “The reason why I chose the criminal justice program,” Barton said, “is because I like helping people. As a result, I have interned and volunteered a lot of my time helping people. I feel that everyone has a purpose in life and that my purpose in life is to help people and make a difference.”

Barton primarily supported herself financially during her two years at Northwestern College except for one quarter when her older half-brother and his wife let her stay at their house without having to pay rent or bills, support of which she was very grateful. While her mother was supportive and happy that she was going to school, Barton attributed her greatest support, though, from her student peers and instructors at Northwestern College. She specifically accredited her graduation with highest honors as valedictorian to a variety of her college instructors, starting with Criminal Justice Program Coordinator and Instructor Mark Mitchell. Mitchell (a retired Lieutenant of the Palos Hills Police Department) stood out for her due to his unique teaching skills. “He was the only instructor I have ever met who is able to teach multiple classes back to back without having to read out of a book or look at notes. He was very knowledgeable in the subject matter. As a result, I have learned so much from him about the criminal justice field.” Barton also praised her general education instructors Bentley Mason and Linda Chambers; Technology instructor Carolyn Johnson who taught several of Barton’s computer software classes; and recently retired Bridgeview Campus Dean of Academics, Dan Miller, for his dedication to the success of his students. During her time at Northwestern College, Barton was enrolled in the Honors Program and was also elected president of the criminal justice club.

Barton’s goal now is to be a police officer and work her way up the ranks of the police department; she is currently testing at various local police departments for a police officer position while working as a compass proctor and tutor at Northwestern College. As she walked early at graduation, Barton is currently completing her final two courses at the College before getting her diploma. She will then begin classes at the University of Illinois at Chicago to pursue her Bachelors in Criminology Law Justice, with plans for an English minor, noting that statistics show she is more likely to be promoted in the criminal justice field with this major and minor. Goals abounding, in addition to a career as a police officer, Barton also plans to teach high school English, attend law school, and work as a criminal defense lawyer or a state prosecutor later in life.

**About Northwestern College:**

Northwestern College (NC) is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and offers focused career-oriented associate degree and certificate programs with flexible schedules and a supportive faculty. Day, evening, weekend, online classes and online programs are available. More information can be found at www.NC.edu or by calling toll-free (888) 205-2283.

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