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By RHONDA CROWDER

Staff Reporter

Mikale Thomas and Allyson Carpenter met atBoulevardElementary SchoolinCleveland Heightsas kindergarteners. Both were at the top of their class. Both were in the gifted program and both ultimately skipped first grade.

However, by the fifth grade, they split up. Carpenter moved toAtlantawith her family. They lived

there for four years then moved back toOhiofour years ago.

Thomas remained inCleveland Heights.

Both thought they never would see each other again.

However, the Joyce Ivy Scholarship recently reunited two young ladies.

The Joyce Ivy Foundation is designed to assist young women from theMidwestin their pursuits of higher education opportunities by attending summer programs at various colleges and universities. Carpenter, now a junior atNordoniaHigh School, and Thomas, a junior atCleveland HeightsHigh School, are both recipients of this award.

So, once Thomas saw Carpenter's name listed on the foundation's website, she turned to Facebook to search for her old classmate.

"Initially, I was really excited. It was like a one in a million chance that I would be able to see Allyson again. I was excited to see her name on the list," said Thomas.

Then, after reconnecting in cyberspace, the two traveled toMichiganfor the Joyce Ivy Foundation Scholarship Gala, where their awards were presented.

"It was amazing. I haven't spoken to Mikale in 8 years. Seeing her was a blessing. It was great seeing someone like her again," said Carpenter.

On receiving the scholarships, both young ladies are grateful.

“I was really honored to have the opportunity to be a scholar. It’s a really competitive program,” said Thomas, who will be attendingSmithUniversity. With dreams of becoming a chemist, she will be taking a genetics and biochemistry class.

She is still undecided as to where she wants to pursue her undergraduate degree.

Carpenter will be attendingHarvardUniversity’s Summer School Program for 8 weeks, taking two journalism classes. She wants to major in journalism and pre-law before going on to become an attorney. She’s even chosen Harvard to pursue her undergraduate degree.

Because she has been taking AP courses and has acquired college credits, including those she’ll pick up this summer, she’ll be a sophomore when she enters the university.

With that, she continues to look toward the future.

“Being accepted to Harvard is the best thing that has happen to me so far,” said Carpenter. “I’m looking forward to the opportunity this summer.”

And aside from academics, both Carpenter and Thomas are involved in extra-curricular activities. Thomas plays the viola and is a member of the contemporary youth orchestra. She also volunteers with Lake Erie Inc., an organization that helps students with writing and other skills. As a freshman, she won the Power of the Pen contest, where she received a $40,000 scholarship to theCollegeofWooster.

Last summer, she served as a leader in training in her school, mentoring incoming freshman.

Carpenter serves on student council, mock trials and peer mediation. She plays varsity basketball, as well, all while achieving a 4.2 G.P.A last semester. She is also the recipient of the Quest Bridge Scholarship. Her mother is very proud of her because she’s accomplished so much in spite of dealing with personal, family issues.

When asked how she's being able to cope in addition to achieving her goals, Carpenter said, "It's important to channel what could be negative into positive energy. I stay around positive people. I realize education is the way out."

To other teenagers, she advises, "Avoid making excuses. It's easy to feel sorry for your self. Always stay busy. You have to remember what's important and that's our future."