

# Jenna-Leigh McKinley: SSA Foundation Scholarship Winner

*Self storage has already been a major factor in her life.*

By John Dunlap, Editor – SSA Globe

For Jenna-Leigh McKinley, self storage has been a source of learning and growth, as well as providing a platform to gain confidence. There aren't many teenagers who can make that claim, but the Fletcher, North Carolina, student is most certainly one. And having been chosen as a SSA Foundation Scholarship Award winner was pretty much the icing on the cake as far as her self storage experience is concerned.

Her mother and father, Shelia and Dave, own and operate Fletcher Self Storage, located in western North Carolina, about 15 minutes from Hendersonville. Dave is a contractor who wanted to get into the self storage business and, over five years, designed and built their facility.

The McKinleys opened Fletcher Self Storage in January of 2006 and brought high school student Jenna-Leigh into the fold to help out in 2008.

"It was a natural process for her because she came to work with me everyday because I homeschooled her," says mom Shelia. "She did learn all about the business and enjoys working with the people. It helped her to overcome her shyness with people as well. When it came time for college and we were searching I knew we would need a little help so my husband was reading the *SSA Globe* and saw that the SSA was offering scholarships so we applied right away."

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SSA Foundation Scholarship winner Jenna-Leigh McKinley knows self storage—she and her assistant, Rambo, have been helping out at her parents' self storage business since 2008.



*The Self Storage Association Foundation (SSAF), the 501(c)(3) arm of the national Self Storage Association (SSA), will commence a scholarship program beginning with the fall semester, 2010. The SSAF Scholarship Program will provide financial aid toward college or trade school tuition in the form of grants to employees or relatives of employees of self storage companies or vendor companies that serve the industry. Eligible companies must be members of the Self Storage Association. The SSAF board of governors thanks the generous SSA members who have already made the program a tremendous success with more than \$370,000 contributed.*

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It actually took a little push and some pressure from Jenna-Leigh's pop Dave to make sure all the forms were filled out.

"My husband was the one who kept asking if we applied for it," Shelia adds. "I was afraid that there would be too many people who would get it, also there was so much paper work involved but now I am glad he kept pushing us to do the paper work because it really did pay off and we are so grateful. It came at such a great time because my husband was not building houses at the time because of the economy and our storage was at a standstill. So when she was awarded we were so excited because it took that much more off of us."

In 2011, Jenna-Leigh hopes to attend Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina, and will be working toward a degree in the health field. She also is a top-notch volleyball player and hopes to be a part of the Brevard women's volleyball team.

"I really wanted to win, but was not sure I had a chance," Jenna-Leigh says. "When my mom told me, I was excited because I knew it would help my parents with my school expenses. I really want to get my degree in the health field...I am working in different health fields to see what I am best at doing. I want to work with people and help them to have a good experience when they are sick."

When asked about working with her mom at the self storage facility, Jenna-Leigh acknowledges that it has had a positive effect on the way she deals with the world around her.

"I like working at our self storage; I still work when I come home for school breaks," she says. "I've gotten to know lots of people and it forces me to get out of my comfort zone. I do have to call my mom sometimes when I need her help with a move-in, but for the most part I can handle the day-to-day operations. It's fun and I get to bring my dog Rambo, who is a good friend."

Other than her work helping her mom at Fletcher Self Storage, Jenna-Leigh is a typical teenager. She loves volleyball and shopping and hanging out with her friends, as well as enjoying her time with Rambo. So what lessons has she learned from being around a self storage business? Her mom Shelia says self storage helped Jenna-Leigh overcome shyness and learn how to deal with the working world in earnest.

"Dave and I both felt that it would be good for Jenna to work for us because it would give her a better understanding of what it would be like to work with people and to gain a sense of responsibility," Shelia says. "Jenna-Leigh says it was really hard in the beginning because she is shy. But as time passed and she got to know the people, then she became a little more comfortable. We are glad when she comes home from college because we put her right to work." ❖