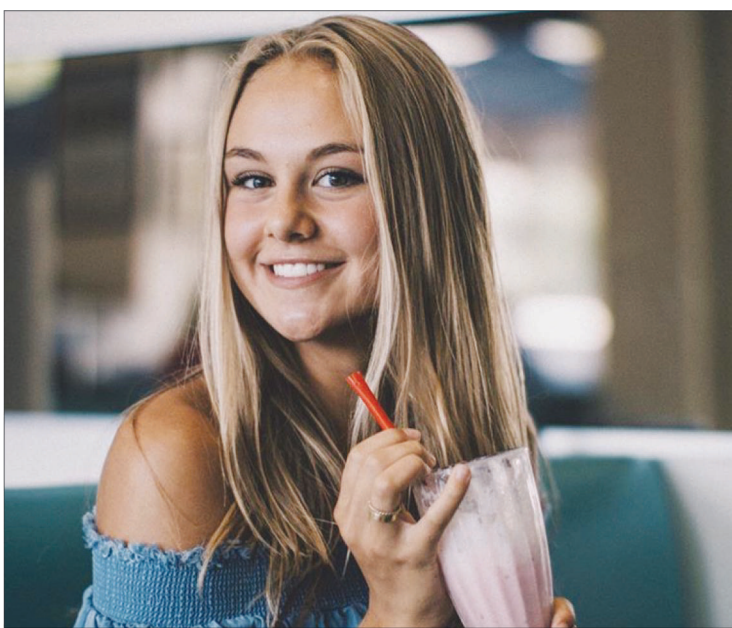


SPONSORED FEATURE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Wood River High School junior Stella Barsotti. Photo courtesy of Stella Barsotti

STELLA BARSOTTI

Student Dives Into Visuals

BY JONATHAN KANE

If you really want to find Wood River High School junior Stella Barsotti, the best place to look may be under the sea.

Carrying a 4.0 grade point average and a member of National Honor Society, Barsotti is taking a heavy course load at WRHS that includes Spanish III, U.S. History, Advanced Placement Language and Composition and Macroeconomics, Chemistry and Precalculus. She is also a member of the student council as well as excelling in volleyball and track for the Wolverines.

But Barsotti's real passion is found in the ocean as a scuba diver; she became certified when she was 12 years old.

"I've always been interested in marine biology, and because I live in Idaho I wanted to see if I liked the ocean," she said. "I always watched National Geographic and Animal Planet and was so interested in the many mysteries of the ocean and all the things that people don't know about [it]. Now I've taken biology and really love it. It's special to learn about all the organisms on earth and how everything comes together."

Barsotti's first dives were on the Big Island of Hawaii. That's where she got her permit for diving.

"I had to take a course online and then you go for four dives with an instructor who evaluates you.

"My first dive, I had the best instructor. I was really nervous, because if you rise too fast it can kill you. The dive lasted about 40 minutes and because I was 12 I could only go down 30 feet, but the deeper you go, the less coral reefs you see. The whole thing was amazing and really eye-opening. When you see the life below the surface, you realize that it is so much more than what we can see from above."

Barsotti's fifth dive was really memorable.

"It was a night dive in Hawaii, which was incredibly cool," she said. "It was to observe large manta rays. We used flashlights to attract the plankton and then the rays would swoop in to feed on them. It was insane because they were so big that it really put yourself in perspective."

Today, Barsotti tries to go as often as possible with her father, Brent Barsotti.

"We get to go to Laguna Beach in California a lot. Of course, it's not as glamorous as Hawaii but it's still really cool to explore a different habitat."

In seventh grade Barsotti also discovered a love of photography when her father bought a camera.

"I took it from him and ran with it," she said. "Originally, I shot a lot with a disposable camera, but now I mainly use my phone. I love portrait photography the most because you can portray emotion and I shoot all my friends. A certain picture of a person can evoke a number of feelings, depending on how you set it up and art direct it. I also love film to capture a moment better than a memory. A memory could get fuzzy but a photo keeps it alive forever."

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