

Scholarly Love

Brothers Receive Co-op Scholarships ... Who's Next in 2020?

By Preston Knight, SVEC Writer

When there's steak on the line, the Jones brothers hit the books especially hard.

Sibling rivalries are generally harmless, so the longtime – and probably forever ongoing – competition among Charlie, Colin and Caleb Jones of Stuarts Draft is a spectacle that the rest of the world can only sit back, watch and let play itself out.

"We were, and are, extremely competitive," said Caleb, the youngest of the trio who is in his first year of studying biophysical sciences and in the honors program at Regent University in Virginia Beach. "When we were in elementary and high school, every time we received our report cards, we would always hurry to compare our grades and see who did the best that quarter. Recently, Charlie had to buy me a steak dinner because of a bet he had made six years prior that he would have the highest SAT scores."

What's striking is that there really are no "losers" in this brotherly competition. The Joneses have found success in their own ways but in many cases have seen their feats overlap, such as each receiving a scholarship from Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC).

The Joneses are believed to be the only set of three siblings to have secured scholarships from SVEC, which initiated the awards program for high school seniors in 1992.

"Almost every new student has that pre-employment phase when their high school savings are running dry. The SVEC scholarship alongside all the others from my community meant I could pay off my fees enough so I could keep enough savings," said Colin, who will graduate from Regent in 2020.

Three's Company

All three brothers have followed similar paths and share displaying "servant hearts" with a commitment to volunteerism, according to their father, Chris. To name a few accomplishments and life moments, they were each valedictorian at Ridgeview Christian

School in Stuarts Draft; recipients of "Christian testimony" awards in varsity soccer; employed at Chick-fil-A in Waynesboro, Camp Hope Haven in Virginia Beach and Charlie Obaugh Auto Group; and involved with Regent's writing center.

Colin plans to attend dental school next fall. He is now working in Regent's College of Arts and Sciences, where Charlie also works full time. Charlie, a 2017 Regent alum, is finishing a master's degree in film-television script and screenwriting.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS JONES

From left, brothers Charlie, Caleb and Colin Jones of Stuarts Draft each received a scholarship from Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative. Caleb was the latest to receive one, in the spring of 2019. All three attend or work at Regent University in Virginia Beach.

Colin said he appreciates that Charlie "blazed the trail" for him and Caleb.

"Is it telling at all to say when I read Proverbs 17:17 as a kid, that 'a brother is born for adversity'; I thought it meant they were the adversity?" Colin said. "Sure, we were always best friends exploring the forest in (our home state) Connecticut and playing endless trampoline games, but we could have intense bickering throughout our play.

"Competition definitely adds a fun component to our brotherhood, but more than that, it pushes us to be better versions of ourselves."

Charlie added: "We were very competitive. However, a side effect of this was that we also hated losing to each other, which meant we typically didn't play games against each other unless we could all win. This meant we spent most of our time exploring the woods, catching frogs and playing lots of cooperative games."

Making a Home in the Valley

Chris and his wife, Cindy, moved the family from Connecticut to Stuarts Draft in 2008 after Charlie's school closed. A lengthy search took them throughout Virginia and North Carolina.

"People in Connecticut thought we were crazy for moving, but God had his hand in selling our house quickly and putting everything in place for us to move to Stuarts Draft," said Chris, commercial sales manager at Charlie Obaugh.

Since that time, the Jones boys have flourished, with some help from their local electric cooperative. Charlie said the SVEC scholarship was the first time the brothers all received the same academic award.

To complete the trifecta, it took a bit of scrambling for Caleb, plus strong encouragement from his father.

"Trust me, there was a lot of pressure to apply and win, mainly because I forgot to apply until the last day," Caleb said of the 2019 deadline. "After a very stressful day of pouring into the application, it was done. Thankfully that work paid off. Because of this scholarship from SVEC, I've been far less worried about the financial burden of college."

Chris Jones encourages parents who receive service from SVEC to pursue a scholarship – or maybe even three.

"We are grateful for SVEC to assist in all three boys' continued education at Regent University," he said. "Their college funds got depleted with the recession soon after moving here so the co-op scholarships were an answered prayer for helping fund their education."

Applications for the 2020 SVEC scholarship program will be available online and in school guidance offices by early January.