Why do you feel you should receive the award?

Ever since I have come to MSU, I have actively sought opportunities to be a leader on campus. I was a high achieving leader in my high school, with much of my efforts focused on the National Honor Society chapter. I did not want my leadership skills to diminish simply because I left for college and was in a new place and out of my comfort zone. Pursuing a major in the hopes of attending graduate school for Dentistry can require great time requirements for class and homework, yet I still make sure to set time aside to actively be a leader on campus. I have put countless hours into making the residence halls a great place to be for all students through the Residence Hall Association (RHA). Whether they are going into their first year, or are returning students, I want the residence halls to be a place for students to live, learn, and grow into their own independent person. I have also actively volunteered around campus through various organizations through the Honors Program. It is always nice to be recognized for all of one’s work on campus, especially when the reward can help me continue to seek higher education. Financial stress is a great burden to students and can hinder their ability to perform in both academics and as a leader. With this scholarship, I hope it can relieve some of this stress so I may continue to pursue my leadership goals on campus, such as becoming a Community Advisor for the 2017-2018 academic school year.

\* List your involvement in campus and community activities.

I am very involved on campus through the Honors Program and interests through my major besides being a leader in the residence halls. Last fall, I was a tutor for the IELI Program here on campus for students learning English and still needed to pass their TOEFL exams. I did this in hopes of helping fulfill my Honors Global Citizenship competency. This year, I had the opportunity to work with this great program again, except it has now been revised to accept more students and is titled IEP. I have put in around 30 hours over the course of both fall semesters and got to know students from around the world, mainly the middle east. I generally worked with students for 2 hours every week on grammar and speaking lessons, as well as helping them understand American culture and college life at MSU. If you would like to know more about this amazing opportunity, my e-portfolio has a journal link of some of the work I’ve done. The link to my portfolio is “Alysiasprzybilla.weebley.com”. For more leadership experience, I also took the “LEAD 2.0” class offered by Kirsten Andrews and Danielle Freeman in the Spring of 2016. This class not only had lifelong lessons on leadership, but we also had to do a community service project as a class to finish the course. We decided to tie blankets and donate them to a local hospital or homeless shelter, hoping for them to go to children in need of something special. We fundraised money in our residence communities, asking students for donations as well as donating ourselves and managed to raise over $50 dollars towards our project. Along with a 50$ set budget, we managed to buy enough fabric for over 15 blankets. We then reserved the classroom Preska 126 and students from across the residence halls were invited to come and tie blankets with us. We had roughly 20 students throughout the four-hour project that came and helped in some form. It was an amazing experience, as I had done a similar project back home where I spearheaded a tie blanket project for Veterans in which I raised over $1,600 and made 100 blankets that were donated to a Veterans homeless shelter in Duluth. To further my campus involvement next semester, I am getting involved in the Pre-Dental club on campus, hoping to improve its awareness for students. I am also doing research with a faculty member in Microbiology and working on the “Reimagining the First-Year” project with Nicole Stock from the Office of New Student and Family Programs.

\* Describe your contributions to your residence community.

Last year, I started out as the RHA representative for my floor. The reason I chose to do this was because my floor disliked the fact that the shower curtains were not wide enough for privacy in the community bathrooms (this was brought up this year again and is currently being fixed). I attended the weekly meetings with pride, and was one of the first floors last year to allocate for an event planned with the help of my community advisor. Our floor did not have weekly community council meetings, so after RHA each week, I would type up my notes from the meeting and post them to our bathroom door. I would often post updates for improvements being made in Carkoski, like getting new breadsticks and different themed days. I would also print posters of items that needed to be voted on at RHA, like room and board rates, in the hallway so that each floor member had the opportunity to voice their concerns and help me decide how to vote at RHA. In the spring, I became the Programming Communications Coordinator (PCC) for RHA, an executive board member position. One of my duties was to be a liaison for the area I lived in. This allowed students to voice their personal concerns for their area to me so that I could then follow up upon with the hall directors or area director so these concerns could be addressed. It allowed me to also become closer with representatives from other floors in my area. I also attend area meetings for my community every month to give updates about RHA to the community advisors about attendance, events RHA was planning, and continuing community councils. I enjoyed the position so much, that I ran for the position as President for this year. As President, I am still a liaison for my area as part of my duties and hold office hours for students to come chat about RHA and learn more about how to get involved. Other duties include presiding over the general assembly meetings, executive board meetings, and being an integral part in some committees on campus. One of the committees is student affairs, a committee run by MSSA. I attend weekly meetings for this committee and help bring up student concerns for living in the residence halls to other students who live off-campus and vice versa so we can understand how students across the university are faring. Through this committee, as well as meeting with Cynthia Janney, the Director of Residential Life, every week, I can better contribute to my residence community by having a powerful voice for student concerns.

For all of my contributions to the Residence Halls, on top of being a great student, I was also inducted into the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH), an honor given to the top 1% of students living in the residence halls. Through this organization, I can recognize students and programs put on throughout the residence halls through Of the Month Awards, Mav Awards, and TOPs Nominations. An integral part of being a member of NRHH is also helping with service projects, such as “Raking the Town” and “Pennies for Patients”. I hope to further my service hours with NRHH next semester and continue to be a voice for all students living in the residence halls through RHA.

\* List your involvement in floor activities.

Last year, I helped plan many floor events, as well as helped work on getting our floor t-shirts. Some of the events planned included a Mario Kart tournament, a spa night, and a painting night to help destress from classes. I was also part of the Honors learning community in which we did many other activities as well. I attended most floor dinners and grew very close with others on my floor, even taking a road trip with some of them this summer. During the spring semester, being the PCC for RHA I got to help all the floors by planning events for all community members. I exercised my leadership skills by creating my own event dubbed the RHA Scavenger Hunt, in which I created maps and clues for students to find gold coins around campus in a St. Patrick’s Day theme fashion to wish students “good luck” on the rest of their semester. All the planning for this event was done with other community council members on my floor and students from RHA in the events committee that I, as the PCC, ran. This year, being the President of RHA and having a very credit heavy major, I am unable to attend as many floor events. At the beginning of the year, I actively promoted community council to other students to steer them onto a successful college path and helped the Learning Community Coordinator on the floor plan some of her events and billboards. I hope to grow closer to my floor this spring semester and attend their weekly community council meetings as I know they are struggling with getting students involved.

\* What leadership activities have you been involved with in the residence community?

As mentioned previously, I have been heavily engaged in RHA, as a representative for my floor, the PCC and the President. One of the greatest duties of the RHA President is the opportunity to attend regional and national conferences. I attended the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH) Conference this past June along with other members from MSU, including the National Residence Hall Honorary President, the National Communications Coordinator for RHA and several community advisors for the upcoming year. At NACURH, students from across the nation come together to practice our leadership skills and teach others how they can help improve the residence halls on their campus through programs. These programs are student led lectures, activities and discussions that cover a variety of topics, including leadership, how to handle stress, parliamentary procedure for meetings, and so much more. Kate Schmidt, one of the Carkoski scholarship winners from 2015, and I presented a program called “How to W.O.W.”, which revolved around the “What’s on Wednesdays?” program that happens every week here on campus. We did a diversity activity in which we colored superhero masks based on certain parts of your identity, i.e.: “color this area yellow if you attended public high school” or “color it green if you attended private school.” The program was super successful and many students reached out to us afterwards to share their own experiences on campus and ask how they could implement something like this at their own campus. Then this fall, I also attended the Midwest Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls Regional Leadership Conference (MACURH RLC). This conference is much like NACURH, except I attended boardrooms with other Presidents to discuss changes we could make on campus. Such as sharing how we at MSU have our Director of Residential Life, Cynthia Janney, come and talk about room and board rates with our RHA, and price out improvements that could help improve the residence halls for students, such as getting ice machines and water filters. On top of attending boardrooms at MACURH RLC, I also presented another program called “Stress Balls and Chill” with three other leaders on campus. This program focused on how to identify and handle stress in your life and how to make simple, cheap stress balls with residents. We received the “Top Ten Program” award for this program, meaning we were in the top ten programs at the conference out of 55 programs total, which was a huge honor to receive.