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Ferris student earns women's automotive scholarship

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University student Anna Branner is aiming for her same goal, but has started down a different path to get there.

Branner, a College of Technology junior, will receive her associate's degree in Automotive Service in May. That degree took longer than expected, she said, because she switched her major to Welding Technology for a year. She plans to next enroll in Technical Education, earn her bachelor's degree and enter teaching.

Last fall she was the recipient of the Mary Simonson-Rehwald Scholarship, sponsored by the Women's Automotive Association International, a group founded by former Ferris Trustee, Lorraine Schultz. Branner won the scholarship based on her grade point average and an essay she submitted.

From an early age, Branner was always interested in "taking stuff apart," she recalled. "I wanted to learn the mechanical workings of things. I'm a very hands-on type person." A graduate of Central High School in Woodstock, VA, her basic interests led her to the automotive field.

Her ultimate goal was to develop a sustainable alternative to the internal combustion engine that is used today. She is adamant about combating fuel inefficiency and especially pollution. So much so that she rides her bike or walks between her downtown residence and campus. "I believe that everyone should try to do what they can to make where we live a cleaner, healthier place," she stressed. "Every small thing helps.

"I choose to be a small part of the solution rather than a big part of the problem," said Branner. Although willing to take on the challenges of improving engines, she now wants to go about it differently. As a teacher, she feels she can change some young minds and perhaps inspire them to use their knowledge of technology to produce a sustainable alternative to the modern engine. "I enjoy teaching," she said. "I'm always helping classmates with problems."

Obtaining her education has been a financial struggle at times for the 26-year-old. That's why she was excited to receive the WAAI scholarship. "Any funds help," she said of the \$1,000 award. "Especially those you don't have to pay back." She currently works in the Automotive Computer Lab and has completed an internship in the Physical Plant Motor Pool.