

# Alumni

DAWSON

Sydney Murdock, class of '08



Sydney Murdock, 2011



“MY EXPERIENCES AT DAWSON TAUGHT ME TO HARNESS MY CREATIVITY, AND ALSO NOT TO JUDGE PEOPLE SIMPLY ON THEIR APPEARANCE.”

Sydney Murdock entered the hall of Dawson as a third-grader, and six years later she entered different hall, those of Washington, D.C., where she worked as a Page for the House of Representatives?

Sydney came to Dawson in 2002, when the School was still relatively new, but Sydney explains that her parents were confident in Dawson's programs. As more and more of her parents' friends began enrolling their own children at the School, Sydney's parents decided Dawson might be a good fit for their daughter.

During her time at Dawson, Sydney discovered a love for theater, performing in nearly every drama production the School offered from sixth through eighth grades. She also participated in the

School's choir, volleyball team and cheerleading squad, where she made lots of friends.

Before graduating in 2008, Sydney performed a lead role in the School's production of *The Music Man*. She credits the drama department at Dawson for making a significant impact on her life and her career aspirations.

Since leaving Dawson, Sydney misses the teachers the most and still keeps in touch with many of her eighth-grade teachers. "The teachers truly cared about each of us, and you could just tell every day in class. I did well in school because they pushed us to be our best," she says.

Sydney credits Middle School History Teacher Michael Burby for



Fourth Grade, 2003



Eighth Grade, 2008

preparing her for high school history. "It was an easy transition because I already knew everything they were teaching us, thanks to what I learned in Mr. Burby's class," she says.

She also believes English Teacher Frank Browne helped prepare her for writing flawless papers and teaching her the SAT words she needed to take the test with confidence, as well as teacher Josh Keilty for preparing her in science. "When I took the ACT, my highest score was in the science section – and science is certainly not my favorite subject," says Sydney.

Even though she graduated from Dawson three years ago, Sydney still comes back to the School to get Spanish tutoring from Kristi Griffith; "I don't know what I would do without her," she says.

When she graduated, Sydney's parents encouraged her to attend The Meadows School her freshman year. "It really wasn't for me," she says. Hoping for a program that would embrace her love for performing, Sydney decided to audition for the Las Vegas Academy for the Performing Arts (LVA), where she is now a junior studying theater and opera. "I absolutely love it there," she says.

"The transition to LVA was unique, and without my experiences at Dawson, I don't think I would have felt as prepared. My experiences at Dawson taught me to harness my creativity, and also not to judge others simply on their appearance," says Sydney.

Sydney recently performed in *Southern Hospitality* at LVA. "It was such a great experience to see how much time and hard work goes into preparing for a full-scale production. I have to keep track of my hours for my coursework, and I counted more than 115 hours of work just for that production alone," she said.

In addition to her love of performing, Sydney also enjoys politics. While in fourth grade at Dawson, Sydney became interested in Shelley Berkley when she studied the Nevada Representative for her "Famous Nevadans" unit. After reaching high school and talking with Mrs. Berkley, she encouraged Sydney to apply for the Page Program at the U.S. House of Representatives.

In the summer of 2010, Sydney was chosen to be a Page for a month in Washington, D.C. "I was the only one chosen in Nevada, so it was a little intimidating to travel across the country where I didn't know a single person," she admits. "But, it was such a great experience," she adds.

While in D.C., Sydney attended classes each morning in the Library of Congress, where she took honors courses in foreign policy, journalism, history and other important subject areas. After her classes, she worked on the floor of the House of Representatives as a Page.

In addition to her political activities, Sydney is also involved in the National Charity League and recently won the Presidential Award for her service.

Sydney's experience in D.C. encouraged her to pursue political science as a career. "When I graduate from high school, I'd like

to attend college in either California or Arizona and obtain degrees in political science and vocal studies," she says. "I know they are two completely opposite fields, but I just love them both so much I don't think I could choose just one."

Following her undergraduate education, Sydney hopes to attend law school, where she would like to pursue entertainment law.

Sydney offers the following advice to Dawson eighth graders who are preparing to move on to high school: "Try to make your own decisions and do what you know is right for you. You have to follow your dreams and have your own opinions." She adds, "Don't try to take every single advanced class that you can; you don't have to make yourself crazy - you should have some fun in high school, too." ■

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