THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

RACING TO SUCCESS

Ghana native Fair Niven adapted to new country to excel in classroom and on the track

St. George's School's Fair Niven plans to major in biochemistry, with the intent to pursue a career in the field of sports physical therapy.

By Vincent Saglimbeni

FOR THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

It's fair to say that not everyone has the same path in life. With different personalities, a person's life journey is what makes them unique.

Few, however, have a story as unique as St. George's School senior Fair Niven.

The senior from Accra, Ghana, was adopted by her family in the U.S. when she was 7 years old. When she first moved, Niven said it was a bit of a transition coming from Africa to the U.S.

"It was very stressful," Niven said. "I was surrounded by only Black people in Ghana, (and) that's what I grew up with. Then I went to the United States and at the school I went to (had) only white people. It was a cultural shock to me."

Despite the cultural shock, Niven has excelled during her time at SGS. Described as loyal, compassionate, kind and patient, Niven has done a lot during her time at SGS, including some work outside of SGS.

For the past three summers, Niven has volunteered with a research group with her mom, Jennifer Shepherd, a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at Gonzaga University. Working as a volunteer, Niven assisted in research with GU students, during which they found a new enzyme with unusual functions and worked on the characterization of it. Shepherd said Niven's name is in the works of being included in a publication called Communications Chemistry, a journal that is part of the Nature portfolio of journals.

"I am very proud of her," Shepherd said. "... Being able to step up (was) pretty big. She was essentially doing the same work that a junior in college was doing, and she wasn't even in high school yet."

Niven has continued to work hard every day. Participating in the IB Diploma Program at SGS, she took other college-level classes in the curriculum during her time at SGS as well as writing a 4,000-word essay about a topic of her choice. Along with her talents in the classroom, Niven is a track star at SGS. Having competed in the 100 meters, 200 meters, 4x100, 4x200, 400 meters and 4x400 as well as in the long jump, Niven will hopefully return to the track after recent knee surgery in time for the state

championship. The Runner WA website named Niven the Sprint Athlete of the Year in the state of Washington last year for the league she's in at SGS.

Niven will be majoring in biochemistry, looking to pursue a career in the sports physical therapy field. With University of Southern California, Chapman University and Santa Clara University on the radar, whichever school Niven goes to will be adding a great member to their community.

"I just have a lot of confidence that (Fair) will be able to engage at a pretty high level in whatever academic and athletic communities she chooses," said Francesca Mulazzi, the head of SGS' Upper School. "She's never taken the foot off of the gas pedal, and my predictions for her is that she will continue to thrive, participate and serve in whatever communities she continues to engage in."

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