

Dan De La Cruz. Photo courtesy of Dan De La Cruz

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

BY JONATHAN KANE

Wood River High School senior Dan De La Cruz likes to lead by example.

Having grown up in the Wood River Valley—except for a six-month stint living in Peru in seventh grade with his family—De La Cruz loves to ski, hang out with friends, and plays football and track for the Wolverines. Along with all of that he holds down a heavy academic course load that includes Advanced Placement Physics and Economics, College Algebra, English 12, Computer Programming and Government.

“I want to help others pursue their dreams,” De La Cruz said. “I want to motivate them to keep going forward during hardships. When I was little, my parents told me, as the oldest, that I should be an example to my cousins. They said that whatever I did, they would do, so I needed to put out a positive example for them.”

De La Cruz has eight cousins.

“Some days it was a lot of pressure. I have a fear of failing and letting them down. Sometimes they want to give up on a subject and I help them pull through.”

And it’s not always just academics.

“It’s also sports. I started playing soccer my freshman year, but I wanted a new experience, so I switched to football my sophomore year and my cousins followed me. They wanted to have the same experience as me.

“One of my cousin’s goals was to make the Ivy Leagues. She came to me stressed out and overwhelmed about the

whole thing and I helped her relieve her stress. She just got accepted to Dartmouth. I’m very, very proud of her and she is still waiting to hear from Harvard.”

In his future, De La Cruz sees a career in aerospace engineering.

“As a little kid, I loved playing with LEGOS and building things and making them work,” he said. “When I grew up and went to the [Wood River] Middle School, I built go-carts and then started to move to more complex machinery.”

In high school, De La Cruz joined the robotics team.

“We built a robot that grabbed objects and we entered it into a competition. Then the robot’s arm malfunctioned before the competition had even started. The team was really down, so I rallied everyone.

“The hand would grip, but the arm wouldn’t work. So we decided to do the best we could with what we had and we ended up making it to the semifinals.”

De La Cruz learned an important lesson.

“When there is no hope, you need to persevere, because you don’t know what can be accomplished. We thought it was over, but we accomplished a lot.”

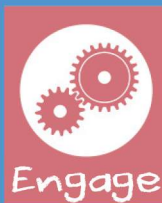
De La Cruz wants to go into aerospace engineering because he has always loved planes and exploring how they function.

“When I was a little kid, I went with my parents to Peru and I wanted the window seat. When we were taking off, I saw parts of the wing move and I thought to myself, ‘How does all this work?’

“I think that’s when I knew I wanted to pursue [aerospace engineering].”

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