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Soeter Completes 100-Book Challenge

MAY 12TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Poplar Bluff High School senior Ben Soeter is the first student in three years to read 100 novels and earn a \$1,000 scholarship via the Designing Women Foundation's Charlie Classics reading program.

The 17-year-old has placed first in his class each year for reading the most teacher-approved literary works, resultantly winning thousands in bank cards in addition to the scholarship. When Soeter was a freshman, he generously donated \$500 back to the PBHS library so the school can replace some of its titles in the Charlie Classics collection. At the time, he declared that it was a goal of his to complete the challenge.

Reflecting on all the books, Soeter said: "It changed the way I think, broadening my outlook of the world and the way I understand it for the better." He added that he has enjoyed the select pieces of literature because they contain morals that he later contemplates. His favorite title of late was "I, Robot" by Isaac Asimov.

Having gotten a jumpstart on reading prior to starting high school, Soeter reviewed his first book with a voluntary program mentor in June of 2011. Students can begin working toward the scholarship in Junior High.

Soeter has been accepted into Rice University in Houston, Texas. His predecessor in the contest, Fathom Hefner, attends the University of Mississippi in Oxford, according to Stacey Scobey, who is the president of the Designing Women Foundation, and also a past scholarship recipient.

The Charlie Classics program, which celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, was originally founded by writer/producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason and has been sustained by individual donors and local businesses in recent years, most notably U.S. Bank.

Photo and article provided by Tim Krakowiak.

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