

## Strope named OC-ADCAT Student of the Month

By: Neal A. Johnson | Source: Unterrified Democrat

Linn senior Lily Strope was selected as the Osage County Anti-Drug Community Action Team (OC-ADCAT) Student of the Month for March, an honor Coach Ryan Rost said she absolutely deserves.

"She's just phenomenal kid, you know, as far as what you expect a high-schooler to be," said Rost, who nominated Strope. "Lily is a good role model and a good friend, always makes the right decisions, and tries to help others."

High School Principal Erin Sassmann agrees. "Lily is the perfect example of an outstanding student, consistently surpassing expectations and showing excellence in all her endeavors," she said.

"Her dedication to academic success is matched only by her active participation in numerous extracurricular activities, from sports to clubs and community groups. Lily plays a significant role in organizing events like homecoming and various school assemblies. Beyond her commitments, Lily stands as a beacon of integrity, proudly maintaining a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle. Her personality shines through as she readily extends a helping hand, whether it be assisting in the office or supporting fellow students, showcasing her unwavering commitment to her school community. Lily's remarkable qualities and contributions undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on those around her, making her a truly exceptional individual."

Strope said she refrains from drugs and alcohol for various reasons, but primarily, she doesn't want to hamper her future. "Your brain doesn't fully develop until you're 25 or 26," she explained. "I'm going to college, and I don't want to mess that up."

With a GPA of 3.97 and salutatorian of her class behind co-valedictorians, Strope plans to attend State Tech next fall to pursue a degree in the Physical Therapy Assistant program. She will use A+ funding to pay for her studies, something she has long prepared.

"I was gonna go to Mizzou for to be a pharmacist, but it's very costly," said Strope. "I want to go into physical therapy, and I can make the same amount of money. I can go back for more college if I want to expand my options. As a pharmacist, you can only go to a certain extent and can't go back unless it's a different field."

Lily was reared to respect herself and not engage in activities that would harm her or others.

"My parents had a lot of discussions with me and my siblings," she said of Scott and Shauna Strope, and Amy and Jamie Stafford. "It was pretty important to them."

She also diligently followed in her siblings' footsteps. "I noticed things, I paid attention, and I avoided things that I knew not to do," Lily said of Adam, Kurt, Lauren, Sydney Strope, LeAnn Horan, and Lindsay Horan, all on her dad's side. "My mom's side isn't around here."

Linn R-2's efforts to teach students about the dangers of drugs were not lost on her. "I think they did a pretty good job of explaining how bad life can get if you use drugs or drink to excess once you're legally able to do that," Lily said.

Still, she noted there was some peer pressure to drink, but Lily stood strong. "I'm a people pleaser, but at the same time, I know my limits, and I know what I'm not supposed to do and the difference between right and wrong," she added. "I get along with people that want to do that stuff, but I don't go hang out with them, and I don't go to parties. You can go watch a movie, eat some dinner, and come back home."

Aside from that approach, Lily keeps herself busy as the senior class treasurer and a member of FFA, National Honor Society, TREND-SADD, Pep Club, and the Asus team. She also played softball all four years at Linn and works part-time at Subway.

"I'm a big member of Linn First (Assembly of God Church), and I've helped with the kids' ministry," said Strobe. "I'm in the youth ministry now, and I after I graduate, I plan on helping with the youth ministry."

She acknowledged the role her faith had in developing her lifestyle. Supportive friends and family also helped. "Most of my best friends are my siblings, and my cousin, Hannah Haslag, she's an eighth grader and might like an absolute best friend," said Strobe. "She's also part of our church, and I would say I'm one of the biggest role models in her life because a lot of kids look up to people who don't party or do drugs and are academically successful."

Though she does not necessarily push her beliefs on others, Strobe is not shy about stating her position, whether others like it or not. "They accept it to an extent," she said. "I feel like some people feel they need to cave in to peer pressure. At the same time, I've been like this my whole high school career. I don't cuss. I don't drink. I don't do drugs. I stay in church, and they know. If they want my help, I'll help them, but if people don't reach out to me, I'm not going to reach out because I don't want to come on too strong with someone. I like to give my opinion if they need it; if they don't need it, I will step back."

As her coach for the last four years, Rost has seen her development. "I got to watch her grow up and see the kind of leader she's become," he said. "I've watched her throughout school; she is always willing to help anybody and pick anybody up, whether they're in her friend group or not. Lily is just an all-around good kid."

Strobe suggested that there's much more to life than a quick high or taking part in activities just to be accepted. "I think you can have a fun lifestyle without drugs or alcohol," she said. "You can go out and have fun. I'm not necessarily saying you have to stay in all the time. Live your life the way you want to, and don't feel obligated to do that."

OC-ADCAT Executive Director Lorie Winslow will present Strobe with a certificate, and he will be eligible to apply for the annual Student of the Month Scholarship.

"I am so excited to showcase our seniors who have chosen to live a drug- and alcohol-free life," said OC-ADCAT Education Committee Chairperson Charlotte Bellsmith. "I know this is not an easy thing to do. The pressure on our teens to drink while still underage is still pretty severe."

For more information about OC-ADCAT, visit <https://www.ocadcat.org>.