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VVC GRAD WINS FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP
Spring Valley Lake native to spend year teaching in Spain
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LOFTY GOALS: **Academy of Academic Excellence graduate** and University of California, Irvine student Loren Salkin will be studying and teaching in Spain for a year through a prestigious Fulbright scholarship.

SPRING VALLEY LAKE • She wants to be the first Jewish female president and win a Nobel Peace Prize — and with a Fulbright scholarship on her resume, Loren Salkin may very well be on her way to achieving those lofty ambitions.

The 23-year-old Victor Valley College graduate was recently awarded one of the nation's most esteemed scholarships: a Fulbright, which is an international educational exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State and the Commission of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Fulbright program offers students grants to study, teach and conduct research abroad and for non-U.S. citizens to come to the United States.

Salkin departed Monday to spend a year in Spain, studying and teaching English in a public secondary school. Born and raised in the High Desert, Salkin graduated with honors from University of California, Irvine, and triple-majored in Spanish, English and global cultures.

“My goal is to foster cross-cultural understanding,” Salkin said. She explained how in pre – Columbian times, Spain used to be a place where Muslims , Christians and Jews lived in peace and mutual respect for each other. “They were tolerant, they co-existed together. I find that fascinating.”

Salkin, who became acquainted with her Jewish roots while in college, also plans on converting to Orthodox Judaism in Spain, as the rich Spanish and Jewish culture lends itself to more in-depth study and reflection. Salkin, a 2006 graduate of the Academy for Academic Excellence, believes that a better understanding of Spanish attitudes toward religion and culture will help her achieve her ultimate goal of dedicating her life to educational innovation and excellence.

The Fulbright scholarship award will also allow Salkin to be an ambassador on behalf of the United States, fostering cross-cultural communication by helping people overcome language barriers that she believes divide people instead of bringing them together.

“I want to understand linguistic differences and how they can be overcome,” said Salkin, who grew up in Spring Valley Lake. “Spain’s long history is fascinating and I really want to help people change their perceptions of Americans.”

Salkin said she was influenced by her grandparents to pursue an education at a young age and fell in love with the Spanish language when she was in middle school. Salkin credits her junior high school Spanish teacher, Quintes Gwynn, for igniting her passion for the language and the country, and believes that if it wasn’t for him, she would not be where she is today.

Salkin spent three years at VVC and graduated from UCI with several academic awards and entry into Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and most prestigious academic honors society in the United States.

The Fulbright program awards 1,600 grants annually to U.S. students, and the scholarship, which is merit based, considers not only academic qualifications and leadership abilities, but genuine altruism as well.

While she was at UCI, Salkin spent her free time as a Spanish tutor and note-taker, assisting students with learning disabilities, deepening her faith and her passion for helping people. Salkin said the experience pulled her away from academics in a good way, by showing her what it meant to put education and discipline to good use.

Salkin will be spending two weeks in Madrid for training, after which she will find permanent housing in the Madrid district of Chamberi. While she is there, Salkin hopes to study the language and literature of Spain, which has been shaped and influenced by many cultures and dictatorships over the centuries.

When she returns, Salkin hopes to pursue a graduate degree in education and a doctoral degree that researches the intersections between Spanish and Jewish cultures. Salkin says she is contemplating a law degree as well, hoping to increase human rights and equality for all. For now, Salkin hopes to travel, study and enjoy her time in Spain to the fullest.

“Mi segunda patria,” Salkin said in perfect Castilian Spanish. “My second homeland. Spain is my homeland.”