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Fifty years ago, the Daily News-Record established its annual leadership awards for high school seniors. Since then, 213 have been awarded.

The seniors who best exemplify a combination of excellence of character, qualities of leadership and devotion to duty will receive the \$5,000 awards.

The selection committee for this 50th-anniversary year includes six winners who represent several decades of the awards program.

This week, the News-Record tells you where they've been and where they are now.

Today: **Jennifer Shirkey**



## Returning Home To Practice Law

**Name:** Jennifer Shirkey

**Award Year:** 1990 (Turner Ashby High School)

**Why did you apply?** I admired previous winners and was looking for help with college expenses.

**What was your reaction when you won?** I was delighted and humbled, very grateful to Sen. Byrd, the DN-R, and the selection committee.

**What did you do with the money you were awarded?** Tuition and books. It was very helpful. Between awards like the DN-R's and my parents' hard work and generosity, I was able to graduate from college and law school debt free — a rare thing these days — that has made accomplishing other life goals much easier.

**What did you do following your graduation from high school?** I Started at the University of Virginia. I missed my hometown and my high school

sweetheart (now my husband, Aaron) too much after just one semester and finished up as an English major at James Madison University a year early in 1993. Then, law school at Washington & Lee followed, and then a clerkship with Judge H. Emory Widener Jr. of the U.S.

Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in Abingdon, a big honor and wonderful career experience. I stuck with my high school plan of becoming a lawyer, although I considered teaching. I knew fairly early on I wanted to stay in this area, and I've been fortunate to find a firm like Keeler Obenshain where I can have a specialized business and tax practice and still bring up our children in a warm, small-town environment.

**What are you up to these days?** Living in a community I feel very fortunate to be a part of, working with colleagues and business acquaintances I feel very lucky to be able to work with, and raising a family I feel very blessed to have.

Daily News-Record  
Leadership Awards

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