



Joshua S. Wallace  
Young Alumni of the Year  
October 6, 2017

Josh Wallace, a 2011 graduate, is an inquisitive young man. An insightful, self-motivated student, Josh was known for his thought-provoking questions, his designs for lab experiments and instrumentations, and his ability to create an exciting crime scene for a summer forensics camp. “Josh is a deep thinker, and I enjoyed my many conversations with him both in and outside of the classroom,” recalls Dr. Karen Torraca, professor of chemistry at Houghton. “He was very much driven by his desire to understand concepts and ideas, rather than just get a particular grade.”

Josh continued that deep exploration during his doctoral studies in analytical and environmental chemistry, and now in his intellectual property law program at the University at Buffalo. Guided by a desire to help educate communities about the complex world of environmental policy and law, he seeks to use his studies to bridge the gap between policy makers and the general public. Individuals and small-scale interests are rarely allowed input in such policy discussions, as the rules are usually dictated by large enterprises. Josh’s goal is to provide the scientific proof and data needed for communities to push for environmental law changes, empowering them to address concerns that affect their health and quality of life.

His keen interest in researching and developing environmentally safe programs and protocols has led him to study pesticides, pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, and other pollutants through his work as a doctoral graduate researcher and an environmental chemist. He ultimately hopes to discover better ways to remove contaminants from the environment and transport them safely. In 2016 he made Buffalo news headlines when he interpreted New York State’s air monitoring test results from a massive fire at the old Bethlehem Steel site in Lackawanna, New York.

Dr. Ron Oakerson, professor of political science at Houghton and one of Josh’s instructors, remarks that “[Josh] is a very special person who has succeeded in combining multiple disciplines at the highest levels of achievement for the purpose of addressing real-world problems.”

Josh volunteers his scientific acumen in his free time as well, focusing on existing community health issues. He has served as symposium organizer and session chair with the American Chemical Society since 2014, focusing on concerns over the lasting effects of antibiotics in agricultural environments. Josh is currently leading an intercommunity soil study in the Grand Island, Kenmore, and North Tonawanda areas of Buffalo, assessing the extent of legacy pollution from historic production of smelting materials.

Josh, in the short time since you graduated, you have made remarkable inroads in educating local communities and helping them develop sound environmental policy. Your servant heart has prompted you to put the needs of others before your own, seeking to better their lives through the use of your skills and talents. You truly exemplify the scholar-servant attitude, and we are proud to present you with the 2017 Young Alumnus of the Year award.