

ESSAY TOPIC

June Nelson Memorial Scholarship 26th Annual Scholarship Competition

Your life is a series of stories. Tell a story that has helped shape you or reflects who you are today, and how that will move you into the future. (Example: stories of relationships, events that have happened in your school or community, etc.)

(Please write an essay of up to 750 words using 1.5 spacing, and use additional white paper if required. Please have proofread before submitting.)

I never thought cancer would affect someone so close to me. I was morosely presented otherwise. In March, 2016, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. When she told me, my stomach dropped. As a 16 year old, I thought that I was powerless in the matter. I knew that nothing I did could cure my mom. I have never felt so helpless; however, I now realized that was, in fact, not the case.

As chemotherapy started, so did my new role. My mom was drained and weak, leaving her incapable of the tasks she performed everyday for my entire life. I started doing more household chores, except now I was not doing them because I was told to, I was doing them because I saw that they needed to be done. My dad works two week shifts followed by two weeks off. While he was on the other side of Alaska, I had to look after my little sister. This included giving her rides and providing her with dinner. I was actively seeking for ways I could help, regardless of how tedious the job was. I matured by looking beyond immediate circumstances and looking for what we needed as a family. I was pushed out of my comfort zone and grew from it.

As the summer before my senior year of high school approached, I realized that I had a couple out of state trips coming up. I was going to travel to a volleyball festival in Arizona with my team. Seeing how stressed and busy my dad was and knowing that my mom was not working made me realize that I had to come up with the money myself. Asking them for help was not an option. I had always been more on the independent side, but my parents always helped me out. I had to make the choice to put my summer on hold so that I could fundraise. Once again, I had to look beyond what I wanted to do and what was enjoyable and easy.

Being a teenager, it is not easy to think about and plan for my distant future. I was forced to do this when my mom found out her cancer was genetic. I was faced with the fact that I have

a 50% chance of carrying an abnormal gene which will greatly increase my chances of getting cancer. Knowing this, I will have to be prepared and proactive many years earlier than most women. I do not get the luxury of thinking I am too young.

I have grown and matured in many ways because of this. I have realized how important it is to be flexible. I have learned how to accept what happens, no matter how bad it is, and do everything I can to help. Looking back on the journey, I know that nothing I did directly fought the cancer growing in my mom, but I know that I made her battle a great deal easier. I learned that not every fragment of support and help is direct. I learned, regardless of the situation, I can help in some way or another. I am not helpless.

Besides learning basic life skills, this event in my life has prepared me for a job in the medical field. Since I was 12, I have wanted to be a doctor. I got hands on experience while I was helping my mom. My mother's battle with cancer confirmed my interest and made me even more passionate about pursuing a career in the medical field.