

June Nelson Memorial Scholarship 2019
Megan Westdahl

My Education and My Future

My mother told me many times that when she was carrying me she always talked and read to me. I started talking and walking before I turned one. As everyone knows, the mother is always the first teacher of the child. When I started in the Early Head Start Program as an infant, I was talking in almost complete sentences and participating in every activity that they provided. Throughout my elementary years, I was at the top of my class. I received many academic awards such as honor roll and high honor roll at our school awards assemblies.

I loved school from the very first day I attended. Once I began junior high, I started to fall behind in school and lose interest in many things. The transition from elementary to junior high was very difficult for me. Though I had many struggles in school, I never gave up on trying to do my best to stay on top of my school work. I had a very traumatic life experience after my eighth-grade year which really affected my progress at home and at school. A very close childhood friend of mine took his life right in front of me. This incident caused me to become dangerously depressed. I did not care about my grades in school or how my actions were towards others. I would get sent to detention, I failed classes and ruined the start of my high school career. After a year of my friend's passing, I too had attempted to take my own life. I was sent to the North Star treatment program in Anchorage, Alaska. During my stay at North Star, I had time to think about my actions and the decisions that I made while being dangerously depressed.

Attempting suicide hurt my friends, my family and most importantly, myself. I decided that I wanted to become a better person. I wanted to pick myself up and make better choices in life. I turned my attitude around in school and at home. I retook the classes that I needed so that I did not fall further behind in school. I did my best and always asked for help with my school work when I needed it. I worked really hard to stay on top of my school work, keep my grades up, and pass all of my classes.

Now I am in my senior year of high school, and this year too has been a challenge for me. I travelled a lot more than usual which caused me to fall behind in my classes. While travelling in bush Alaska, the weather this year has delayed my return to school for days. As a result of missing so much school, I had very low grades in my classes. Now that I am finished travelling for the rest of the school year, I am doing way better at keeping up with my classwork. My grades have not always been the best since I have started my freshman year, but I have not given up on pushing myself to keep up.

The struggles that I have faced at a young age; experiencing and witnessing traumatic events, dealing with depression, and falling behind in school has made me a stronger person! I have high expectations for myself and goals that I have set for myself once I from graduate high school. I have been accepted to the University of Alaska Anchorage and I am going to study Social Work. I want to help others cope and deal with their issues in life in a positive way. The knowledge

and experience that I have will help me encourage others that they too can overcome any obstacle in life. I have experienced people and therapists that seemed like they did not truly care about the issues that I faced. I want to make sure that the people who I see when I am a social worker know that I truly care and really want to help them. I am very confident and motivated that I can do way better in college than I have in high school. I am very determined to achieve my goal to graduate at the University of Alaska Anchorage and receive my Bachelor's degree in Social Work.

Thank you in advance for considering me for this scholarship, which will help me to follow my dreams of becoming a caring social worker to help others.