

Marissa Yliniemi

Empowerment

Many youth today struggle to find confidence, strength, and control over their life and I use to be one of those youth. In my own life, I struggled finding confidence. I didn't know where I stood; I didn't feel like I belonged anywhere. What helped empower me was someone who believed in me, pushed me to be my best and who was just there for me.

This person was my teacher, my basketball coach, my boss and my friend, Joseph Wetzel. It started from when he let me, a young 5th grader, play soccer with some older kids in the field after school. Then when I start middle school, he challenged me to step up to the plate. He gave me the opportunity to play big minutes in a higher division of middle school basketball. I figured, if my coach could believe in me; I could believe in myself.

After that year, I skipped a grade and was introduced to a whole new environment. I had new peers, new teachers, a new coach and a loss of confidence. When I got into high school Mr. Wetzel became my teacher, and then later on became my varsity basketball coach and then my boss. Spending that much time together, we became friends. We bonded over things like academics, sports, and the shared interest in Harry Potter. He helped me get through some tough times throughout my high school career. He was there for me through out everything from my academic life to personal issues. I do not know where I would be in my life if I had not met Joseph Wetzel.

Joseph Wetzel's impact on my life has left me wanting to empower students everywhere. He made me realize how much a single person can change another's life. I have realized how much of a positive impact he had on my school, my peers and my teammates and I would like to do the same for someone else. If I could empower one other person, I would be glad.

If I want to empower another, I have to be someone they could look up to. That is why I am planning on furthering my education. I want to get a degree and show the youth in my rural community that it is possible. I want to inspire the youth and be someone they respect. If they respect me and look up to me, I believe one day I may be able to help empower them. I could instill confidence in them by believing in them. I want to encourage them, challenge them and just be a caring role model for them to look up to.

It is time to empower each other, to empower the youth. The youth is our future. Without the youth, our values, our honor, and our culture might not live on. Their life will affect our own lives and the future generations of our people. It is time to instill confidence, strength and give the youth control over their future for their own good and the good of our people.