

More Than Just a Teacher

by

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An old saying that I remember hearing when I was a child is, "it takes a special person to be a teacher". Now that I am no longer a child and have had a countless number of teachers, I could not agree more. It takes an extraordinary person to be a teacher. A teacher is somebody who loves enriching the minds of their students with their knowledge. A teacher believes in their students and pushes them to succeed. A teacher is somebody who inspires their students.

I've had my fair share of teachers and as a high school junior, I know the difference between a teacher who inspires their students and a teacher who just simply puts a grade on a report card. I've also had one very special teacher who has shared her knowledge with me, believed in me, inspired me, and brightened my life during its darkest time.

Last year, just before Thanksgiving time, I had gotten very sick. After numerous visits to my local doctor and a visit to a doctor in Memphis, I ultimately found out that I had cancer. My family and I were devastated and in total shock. We could not believe that I had cancer and was going to be admitted to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital a few days later.

After only a few days as an official patient at St. Jude, I was already due to begin a year-long protocol of chemotherapy and radiation. Since I was going to be at St. Jude the majority of the following year, I had to leave my teachers and friends at Crockett County High School in order to complete the rest of my sophomore year and my entire junior year through the school program at St. Jude. Little did I know how much of a blessing in disguise it was that I began school at St. Jude. I also had no idea that Mrs. Amanda Little, my new high school teacher, would have such a tremendous impact on my life.

The St. Jude School Program is accredited as a "Special Purpose School" by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It gives patients the opportunity to continue their education while undergoing treatment at St. Jude. It teaches K-12th grade students and is basically just like every other school that I've attended. In some ways, it is even better. I have only one teacher, Mrs. Amanda Little, who has been with me from the beginning. She teaches me, one-on-one, every one of the subjects that I take each semester. Also, she regularly emails



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my teachers at Crockett County High School and gets all of the assignments and lesson plans in order for her to teach me what I need to know for each class that I take.

Mrs.Amanda is a modern day "renaissance woman". No matter what subject I take, she knows how to teach it to me and make me want to learn it. Biology, algebra 2, chemistry, medical therapeutics, and even a dual-enrollment medical terminology class are just a few of the classes I've taken that have been no match against her remarkable skill of being able to transform a subject matter into something that I understand and remember. Even though my body has been weakened from the radiation and chemotherapy, my mind still craves the information that I can learn from all these different subjects and Mrs.Amanda understands that. She has enabled me the opportunity to continue to learn and enrich my mind in order to keep up with my classmates at CCHS. Mrs.Amanda also motivates me to keep my grades up, and ever since I began the St. Jude School Program I've maintained my A average. Recently, I took the ACT for the first time, and scored a 31. I was overjoyed when I received my score because I had worked so hard to achieve a high score. Mrs.Amanda had helped me study and prepare for months before the test date. She also helped me build up a confidence that tremendously helped me when the time came to take it. Her guidance and encouragement has helped me learn that anything is possible despite whatever else that I may be going through. That is something that I will remember, not only now, but for the rest of my life.

For me, the school at St. Jude is a refuge from the world of hospitals and procedures. It is a place that I get to go to and focus on things other than my illness. I have realized that Mrs. Amanda cares about a lot more than just supervising me while I try to learn from a book. She has seen me at my low points and at my high points; therefore she knows how to make me feel better if I am ever upset or dispirited. Every time that I walk into the school room, I forget about whatever troubles are on my mind. She doesn't look at me as a teenager with cancer, but as a normal person who wants to learn new things. She pushes me to succeed. She inspires me to look at the good in my life as well as all of the good in the world. It takes a special person to be a teacher and I can't think of a more special person than Mrs.Amanda Little.
