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NJRC Scholarship

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Learning to Trust

It all became reality for me when that white picket sign appeared in the center of our patchy green lawn during late October. It was the start and from then on, yard sales, cardboard boxes, and an uncomfortable lifestyle was what I new. That was the beginning of an adventure, one full of google images and internet searches of my soon-to-be address. I was elated until one evening during packing my mother said that she would have to leave us in Florida, at least until the new year, while she settled our new apartment in New Jersey. I was anxious and confused, now realizing the uncertainty of the future.

My mom and stepdad had flown up to New Jersey shortly after we sold our home, and in about a month before my brother and I would follow suit; we were staying with my grandmother until then. I was alone for most of it, acting as a translator, as my grandmother only spoke spanish and my brother, Kevin, spoke none. I transformed into a support figure for not only him, but myself as well during that time. It was a very painful experience and I battled an immense feeling of loneliness, unsure and feeling like I had no space to call my own. Going to to school lost its flavorful tinge, as I had always been the utmost studious, and my interest in nearly anything dwindled; I just wanted to be with my family again.

Weeks passed and it felt like I would never leave! The days before I would board my flight to my new forever home were painstakingly exhausting and the anxiety and readiness to depart filled my veins every morning. I knew that my time spent in Valrico, Florida was long

overdue; I was ready to forge new paths. Even so, eventually that morning did come and as I sat in the airport waiting to board my flight, my lungs filled with a convoluted mixture of bright, radiant light, and ecstatic, nervous energy. The gate opened and Kevin and I walked down the path to our final destination.

Two and a half hours later, my younger brother and I arrived in what seemed like a new world. I looked eagerly for my mother who would be waiting for us in baggage claim. When I caught sight of her shiny black curly hair, I filled with a rush of emotion, running to her while crying, embracing both her and Kevin in an engulfing hug. It was over- all of my suffering nights and lingering questions of what would await me in this new place had ceased. It had been so difficult to be strong for so long without my mother with me for immediate support. I will always remember that moment in the airport with such jarring emotion, as that one hug seemed to release me from a cage of fear and uncertainty. I was vibrantly happy and ready to get in the car to finally go home. I knew I was ready for whatever awaited me, but I could have not guessed in a million years what would ensue for me shortly thereafter.

When we got outside it was freezing! The humid, sunny, and tropical days of Florida were long behind me, as I soon accepted that for the next three months, cloudy and cold days would be my reality. Finding my way was not easy; I had left Cassidy, my best friend of seven years, and the familiar places that I had been so accustomed to. I guess the most troubling thing was leaving my Dad. My parents divorced in 2011 and since then I never really had a great relationship with my father. I often felt like a bad daughter and was guilted into going over to his house for the weekend, but the move was different. I knew that moving to Montclair was a step I needed to take for me and me alone.

I started school a week after settling into my new home. Everything was wildly different, the building was old and most of the classrooms looked well used. It was dark and the complete antithesis to my school in Florida, which was a newly built, entirely outdoor school. I can proudly say that transferring in during the middle of sophomore year was definitely one of the hardest situations I have ever had to adjust to. All I had to start me off on my first day was a very confusing schedule in my hand, as the million rushing kids around me pushed past on their way to class. The days repeated and it became overwhelmingly evident that the rest of my classmates already had their friends, cliques and connections- most of which did not need a new member to join their group. My feelings of isolation only escalated upward.

At the end of that school year, I encountered a very serious personal crisis. I was struggling with major depression and anxiety, causing me to be admitted to a children's psychiatric unit. The unresolved emotional conflict with my father, coupled with a catastrophic sentiment of loneliness is essentially what caused the compounding of emotion over numerous months. I encountered feelings so profound and heart-breaking that I will not elaborate, but after a week under close care, I was once again back on my feet. I left that hospital with a newly developed outlook on life- one that would develop over the course of the next two years.

The relocation had impacted me in a way I could have never imagined, yet I firmly believe everything happened as it needed to and here is why: I developed into a woman I may have never become had I not been shown how to deal with my conflicts during my difficult times. It was undoubtedly the most trivial point in my life thus far, and still it causes an emotional spark within me as I speak about it, yet what proceeded soon after was a silver lining that I so desperately needed. It was as if the clouds separated as summer skies rolled around and

I began to make deep rooted connections with myself, helping me to strengthen connections to the world around me. I rekindled passions of working with children through the YMCA and resumed playing the violin, but most importantly I once again embraced the love of my education. I know that the relocation to a very foreign climate with very different people caused me to undergo a series of revelations that proved to me just how much I can endure. I now realize that for me, it is the lowest of my moments that truly show me who I am, and force me to make a decision about what I want for my life.

For any individual my age going through a similar time in their life, I would advise them only one thing- trust. Life becomes convoluted and messy, situations can quickly turn, and hardships are bound to come, regardless of circumstance. Yet, you will always have you and that is why I believe trust is so important. Isaac Watts once said “Learning to trust is one of life’s most difficult tasks,” which I have found to be entirely correct. It will not be easy, but if you are able to have complete confidence that all will end up okay, then you have conquered one of the most challenging feats of this lifetime, as it is so easy to get caught up in the future or the past. Circumstance will change, location will change, and people will change, yet if there is anything that I have come to learn, it is that if I am able to have a deep rooted knowledge that life happens for a reason, then I know I must be alright in the end. To trust that every beautifully painted piece of the puzzle will fall into place is not easy, but it has been happening for thousands of years. This same process will continue for your life, as you have assurance that all will be peaceful in the end.

Extracurricular Activities:

School Year(s)	Name of Activity (Club, Sport, Volunteering, Job)	Description
9th	Volunteering- Community Pool	I volunteered at the pool as a swim instructor to help marginalized children (age 3 to 6) learn how to swim.
9th	Volunteering- Chargerthon	Chargerthon is a student-led fundraiser to raise money for the Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital.
9th, 10th	Volunteer- Chamber Orchestra	I volunteered for eighth grade student workshops led by the instrumentalists of the high school. We also put on free performances for charities.
10th, 11th,12th	Job- Swim Instructor	I worked as a swim instructor at the local organizations, BSAC and the YMCA, to help teach 2-10 year olds to swim.
10th	Activity Classes- Rutgers Night classes	I participated in a Rutgers Mini-Medical school program and took night classes after school to gain this experience.

11th, 12th	Job- Summer Camp Mentor/Counselor	I had the amazing opportunity to spend my summer as a counselor with different groups of campers, while traveling around the northern NJ area on field trips.
11th, 12th	Club- Friends of Rand Park	In this club, we aim to

		preserve the natural beauty of the park attached to our school, while also producing sustainable crops in a nearby garden.
11th	Volunteer- Dig Pink	As a member of the school Volleyball team junior year, I decided to participate in a fundraiser game held to raise money for breast cancer research.