

## Honorable Mention Prose – High School

### **Focusing On What's Important**

**By: Forest Walker**

**Grade: 12**

**School: Petoskey High School**

I was fourteen and just finishing eighth grade when my sister was diagnosed with stage two lymphocytic leukemia. She had just turned sixteen years old. The day after she was diagnosed my parents sat us down and said that Darby would be leaving. My sister stayed at Sparrow hospital in East Lansing for months while my dad and I stayed at home. She would come up every couple months to say hello and rest only to return back to Sparrow for more treatment. It was such a tremendous change of only having my father, everything was so quiet and lonely. One weekend we had rented a cottage on Walloon Lake to give Darby something new rather than staring at the hospital walls well chemo dripped into her system. We had the cottage for three days and Darby who couldn't eat because she would just turn around and throw it up was on a feeding tube. This was heartbreaking to watch, as she has always loved and appreciated quality food, but was trapped in a set of tubes and pouches.

One morning I walked out onto the balcony of the house and looked over to see Darby laying on the couch, suddenly her eyes rolled back into her head and she rolled off the couch onto the floor. I screamed for help and my grandmother ran over and took Darby in her arms as she started to seize. I called 911 and ran downstairs and grabbed Darby's hand well waiting for the ambulance. As soon as the EMTs arrived they loaded her into the ambulance and drove off. My father and I followed them to the hospital. We ran into her room as they started to give her fluids. Darby who was now on all sorts of medication grabs my hand, as they tell her they need to get to Sparrow now. Well the doctors were wheeling Darby down the hall Darby who was still holding my hand starts to yell "Don't let them take me, Forest, I don't want to go back". I didn't get to see Darby again for another 3 months.

She told me that she doesn't remember anything from that day, but I don't think I can ever forget it. The image of Darby on the table calling my name is seared into my brain. For a long time, that's all I could ever see when I closed my eyes.

My sister is my hero and my role model she has influenced me more than she will ever know. This paper is supposed to be about me and my education but I've learned how to persevere through hardship and struggle because of my sister. She is currently at Michigan State University studying to be a nurse practitioner. I want to be a chef and open my own restaurant, when Darby was going through cancer I distracted myself by cooking I started working in restaurants when I was fourteen and fell in love. Cooking means so much more to me than just food. Cooking is the silent expression of emotion and passion. Darby motivates me to be more and do more because she has always been so strong. The event of Darby having cancer hasn't been a setback in my opinion. I feel as if it drives me to accomplish more because I know how much I can withstand.