

Gina Darby

"Be strong, whatever comes your way you will get through it," was always a common refrain from my mother. "Life is short, and demanding." It was not until she was diagnosed with cancer that I understood the full impact of those wise words. This was the most horrifying time of my life. Getting ready to enter high school while simultaneously facing emotional disarray, is not what I had hoped for while being a freshman. This was supposed to be the stepping stone of my life. A beginning of my life's story, where classes are difficult and parents support you. While studying and trying to make sure she was comfortable as well as assisting my two younger siblings with their homework; I had to do all this while following my mother's words to get the best education possible.

It was precisely because of my mother's medical condition, that I have been inspired and motivated to propel me in my academic studies. As a result, I studied harder and buried myself into my school work which helped me to cope with my mother's conditions. In addition to my academic studies, I had decided to become started dancing advocated the inclusion of Advance Placement classes that were not offered in my school. This helped me to temporarily release my mind of all its worries as well as demonstrate my leadership qualities. Just as I was beginning to accept the changes in my life, the cancer spread to my mother's hipbone and liver. She had to stop working in order to receive chemotherapy, this meant she would be weaker and would ever face even more agony. I did not stop maintaining good grades but I was becoming emotionally drained. Continuing to achieve the highest standards I had set for myself, I believe that education was my way out of this madness as well as giving my mother the least to worry about.

As a junior in high school I decided to take the PSAT although I had little preparation for this test. After taking the test I scored an 1110, which earned me a position for the Peter Jay Sharp Princeton review classes that was worth a thousand dollars (\$1,000) for twelve (12) sessions. A month after participating in this scholarship program my family lost our apartment and became homeless. Being homeless was the most burdensome thing that I faced. Having to live with friends, while separated from my siblings and going to school daily as if nothing have changed. It was too late to give up and I worked harder than ever while living with friends daily and getting little rest. While being homeless I worked as well to help my mother out at this time of need. Working crazy hours while being consistent with my academic studies I had to stay positive for this was a crucial year and I had dreams on applying to colleges the next year. These new challenges empowered me but did not

make me dependent or make excuses for not achieving my goals, I was determined to excel through my hard work whenever possible. I earned a position in the National Honor Society. Because of my outstanding academic performance and leadership qualities. I was honored to be apart of such a prestigious award program. It was gratifying to see I was able to cope with all of the obstacles I faced while continuing to produce exceptional work.

My mother's illness and being homeless made me appreciate the sanctuary of school. These experiences build my character that encouraged me to be independent and self-motivated. It allowed me to appreciate life and its offerings. Although faced with adversity I know significance of help during the time of need. I may not like to wear my problems on my sleeves but in order to attend college I must receive assistance from grants and scholarships I knew that later on in life I would benefit from it, " A degree is something that no one can ever take from me." Recognizing the importance of education led me to enjoy life knows what is destined for them. I continue to perform exceptionally in school, although my mother is still currently fighting her battle with cancer. This proves to me that one never experiences more than they can handle for if it wasn't true I wouldn't be a competitive student, ranked high among the best students.