

Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2017

Grace McMahon

Our Lady of Visitation

I believe that God has blessed me with the gift of helping others in every way I can each day. I look for opportunities to encourage others. I also get to know someone before I judge them. These gifts have been developed over time, and I hope I continue to grow even stronger in these gifts as I walk through the journey of life God has given me. I look for the good in everyone I meet, and most of all I wish for the best in every single person.

When I saw that the topic was based on helping others, I knew right away who I would write about. My cousin William, who is nine years old, has cognitive and physical disabilities. He can walk, but not as easily as you and I can. He has trouble with his words, but after being around him a lot you can understand what he is trying to tell you. While anyone who first met at him would only see his struggles, I see the best person I have ever known. He is great in every way, and is always up for a challenge. He needs help in his everyday life though. Whenever we are together, I am the one he chooses to feed him, bathe him, or get him ready for bed. I am always happy to help. We sit together at the table while I feed him. We have moments where we can't stop laughing, and sometimes I think that helps more than anything else. When getting ready for bed we sit on his giant bean bag chair and read several books. William always has a great sense of humor. He sees the laughter in everything, and that is something I try to learn from him.

I enjoy helping him in whatever he needs. Sometimes the help he appreciates the most is just simply being played with. My great-aunt has a volleyball court, tether ball, and a playset. These are all things William loves but can't do as easily as other people. I am always right there beside him when he wants to go down the slide, bump the volleyball, or play tether ball just like everyone else. It is a good exercise in patience because he can't go as fast as I could. He enjoys every step of the way though. He comes to every one of my basketball games that he can, and is in love with the sport. We even play with the mini basketball hoop he has in his house. This is one of his favorite things to do. Next weekend, we are going bowling for his birthday. I will be the one to carry his ball so he can push it, feed him his birthday cake, and help him unwrap a present if he needs it. I love it. He is like my best friend, and I would do anything for him. He may never understand how much helping him means to me, but I will always love him for it.

One of my favorite memories with William was at Christmas in 2015. We had turned on Daniel Tiger for my youngest cousin, Lily. After William and I had cleaned up our dessert plates and put his pajamas on (which usually results in lots of laughter), we all sat down in the living room together. William wanted to play for a little bit so we got out the toys. He threw a ball and I went to get it. He thought this was hilarious. Once he got tired of that he sat down on the couch and leaned up against me. He just laid there for about an hour. It was the best feeling to know that he feels the same way about me that I do about him. Spending time with William makes me feel like I'm making a difference in my own way. My Aunt Emmy, William's mom, sometimes says that William thinks I'm the best thing ever. I hope this is true because I feel the same way about him.