

# Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2015

Kylee Fitzgerald

OLV

After thinking about all the events in my life where I affected people's lives in a positive way, there isn't just one that seems to be spectacular or particularly special. However, the impact I was able to have on people in various situations will always remain close in my heart, knowing that I was able to make even the smallest difference.

The earliest example of this was when I was six years old. My grandmother was in hospice after a long battle with lung cancer that eventually spread to her brain. We would visit the hospice facility often and even at such a young age, seeing all the sick people overwhelmed me with sadness. I wanted to do something to bring joy to the patients and the caregivers that worked there. I came up with the idea of selling cold bottles of water at my neighborhood street sale, taking place on a hot June day. My parents purchased the water and I made signs advertising bottles of water for sale for \$.50 with all proceeds being donated to Hospice of Cincinnati. To my surprise, I raised over \$55.00 in a few hours. What I remember most about that day was not the amount of money that people donated, but the stories they shared with me and my family about how so many lives had been touched and helped by Hospice. My Dad drove me to Hospice so that I could personally donate the money. They were so impressed by my fundraising efforts that the President of Hospice of Cincinnati came to meet me and accept the donation. Obviously I was too young to expect any sort of praise, so I was surprised when they wrote a story about my efforts in the Hospice of Cincinnati newsletter titled "A New Generation of HOC Supporters – Fundraising Starts At An Early Age". Later that year, after my dad had shared the story with his co-workers, they were inspired to raise and donate \$5,000 to Hospice of Cincinnati. I learned at a very young age that even the smallest amount of effort to help people can lead to bigger things. Looking back, I realize that \$55.00 is not the large amount it seemed to an eager 6 year old, but it sparked my desire to make others feel good.

My desire to bring happiness to others continued over several years during the Christmas season. My family has "adopted" a less fortunate family and provided presents to them and the children who would not have had the Christmas I have been so lucky to have. I truly enjoyed picking out gifts for these children, ranging from everyday needs to fun toys for them to enjoy. I will never forget delivering the presents and seeing the sincere appreciation on the face of the Mom who was receiving these gifts. I don't think the children knew that their Mom could not afford to buy them presents. The children woke up on Christmas morning with lots of gifts under the tree. I imagine there is no better feeling as a parent to see their kids excited on Christmas morning.

The most significant event in my life where I was able to put the needs and feelings of others before my own was also the most difficult time of my life. My Grandfather was in an accident that resulted in a broken neck leaving him paralyzed, on a ventilator and hooked up to many machines. At the time of his injury, I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I didn't understand what was going on or why any of this was happening. To say I was terrified is an understatement. When he finally was conscious and allowed to have visitors, he repeatedly asked to see me. I just couldn't bring myself to see him like that. For days my parents would say I was at one practice or another, just so they didn't have to tell him that I was too afraid to see him. I finally realized that he needed to see me. As hard and scary as it was for me to walk into the ICU and see this strong man that I idolized, now dependent on machines to breath for him and keep him alive, it brought the biggest smile to his face. I will never forget that smile. It made both of us realize that he was the same person as before the accident. Then I realized how important it is to put the needs of others before your own. Sadly, my grandpa never made it out of the hospital, but I truly believe that by

putting my fears aside and spending countless hours at his bedside, I was able to bring happiness to his last days.

**“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”**

The events I have described are just a few of the ways that with God’s help and guidance, I was able to fulfill God’s call to serve and help others without any personal gain. After thinking about this topic, it made me realize that is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of the world, but that everyone needs to take time to be there for others, especially in their time of need. After writing this essay, I am now inspired to do more selfless acts of kindness. In the years to come, I hope to continue to touch other people’s lives, if even in the smallest way. I thank you Mr. and Mrs. Meinhardt and the Sophie’s Angel Run committee for the reminder that I can spread God’s love with others.