

College - Potential #1

My name is Susan (Suz) Wielgopolski. I am submitting this piece for your essay contest entitled, "What I Most Learned from My Parents/Grandparents. I Live in Wilkes Barre PA. I hope you enjoy my story.

If you need to contact me I can be reached at 570 824-7982

Thanks for the opportunity to share a small piece of my life.

What I Most Learned from my Parents

What I learned most in my life I learned from my mom, but I learned life lessons from my dad as well. Elizabeth was her given name, but she loathed it. She simply liked to be called "Betty." She came from a violent, loveless home where she was never wanted. Her parents would fight with weapons using her as the pawn in the middle. She was told on a regular basis that she was never wanted and should have died before she was born. At a very young age she was thrown into a lake and told to sink or swim at which time she sank and almost drown. Her aunts gave her a strong catholic background from which she embraced a tremendous faith and helped her gain some self worth. One would think coming from such a home would have made her a very bitter, heartless individual; however, she was anything but.

She married my dad at the age of 19. I come from a family of five children of which I am the youngest. My dad worked away five days a week to support his family. . He, too, was instrumental in shaping my character. He was a patriotic man with a very strong work ethic. On the softer side of him was his sense of humor, his infectious laugh and his charisma. I believe it's from him that I get my stubbornness, my work ethic and my humor.

My mom was the disciplinarian, the chef, but, most of all, the caregiver. Her voice was soft, calming and reassuring, her touch as gentle as a feather lightly brushing your skin and a laugh that was so contagious you couldn't help but laugh as well. She was not a woman to let you know if she was sick and always reminded you that no matter how bad things seemed at that time tomorrow would somehow be better.

In late 1997 early 1998, my mom was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She never let it slow her down; until, she finally she went to sleep in God's arms on January 18, 2001. I couldn't imagine how I was going to make it through each day without my best friend, my hero, my mom. In 2004, I was diagnosed with the onset of cervical cancer. Despite this news, I didn't let it beat me because of the example my mom had set for me throughout my life.

I finally realized what I had learned from this amazing woman. She taught me that patience really was a virtue, that no matter how bad things seemed you could

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always find your smile, that without love and faith nothing was possible, but with both of them nothing was impossible. She taught me that you can always triumph in the face of adversity, and it's ok to let people see the real you. I can only hope that one day I will be a quarter of the woman she was.

College potential winner
#2

*“What I Most Learned From My
Parents or Grandparents”*

The Times Leader

Essay Contest

College Division

February 10, 2011

Kristina M. Toussaint

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“All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother”

-Abe Lincoln

“You are my sun, my sky, and my whole wide world!” I cannot attempt to number the times my mother has uttered these simple, yet remarkably meaningful words to me throughout the past twenty years of my life. Though the utterance is short, it perfectly depicts how she has always treated me. From going back to school to become a pharmacist to provide our family with more stability soon after I was born, to devoting hours of playtime to me, meticulously setting up tea parties and socializing my countless Barbies, to gently introducing me to the benefits and rewards that dedication and honest hard work can bring, my mother has been a guiding light for me throughout my entire life. Although the demands of her work have never been scarce, she has yet to make me feel like I am anything but her top priority. What kind of superhero is this woman; this woman who stays up late to console my fears and insecurities, who conjures up a ridiculous joke whenever I need it most, who has never tried to restrict my aspirations in any way? She is my mother, Eileen Toussaint, and she has taught me how to love. Yes, she taught me my geography, multiplication, and how to walk in heels, but what I have realized is that this world, as cliché as it may be, is kept in balance by love and by the type of people like my mother, who, despite all of the hardships and obstacles life continues to throw at them, are the ones trying to keep love and optimism at the epicenter.

My mother has faced numerable obstacles throughout her own life that could have seriously affected the kind of outlook and attitude she has towards others. She was forced to deal with the terrible devastation of the flood of 1972, she helped her four siblings cope with each of their own growing pains, managed to overcome the sadness that losing a baby brings; and housed and took care of my cancer-ridden grandfather right up until his death while still mothering my sister and I

in such an attentive way during those “Barbie” years. Again, this superhero has never ceased to amaze any of us. Even now, she is well-known in her field for being a thorough, reliable worker, yet she is also now supermom to my younger brother who is only ten; never missing a basketball game and tiptoeing in every evening for a goodnight kiss!

No amount of affectionate anecdotes or description of the adversity she has met can truly depict the kind of teacher my mother has been to me or the profound effect she has on every aspect of my life and my being. She is my rock and my inspiration. She has taught me that love is crucial for and possible in even the roughest times for it awakens our souls and gives life meaning. For this, she is “*my sun, my sky, and my whole wide world.*”

Times Leader Essay Contest

College: Potential Winner #3

Kira Wagner

Senior with Biology & Philosophy majors at The University of Scranton, Scranton, PA

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In 500 words or less, write an essay on what you learned from your parents or grandparents. A panel of judges from all 3 participating sponsors will select a first, second and third place prize.

Most Important Lesson: Be A Good Person

On Tuesday, I interviewed at Tufts' veterinary school in Massachusetts and one of the best questions that my interviewers asked was, "Who do you admire?" With barely any thought, I mentioned humanitarians. And, then without hesitation, I immediately responded with a seemingly cliché answer, which was that I admire my parents the most because they have taught me so much.

I was adopted when I was five months old from South Korea and the issue of my being adopted has frequently been questioned by people. "How can you love your parents? They aren't related to you by blood!" is the incredulous words that I hear, sometimes even from people who do not know anything about me beyond the fact that I am adopted. My three other siblings are also Asian adoptees. I have learned a great deal from my parents, and perhaps the greatest lesson that I carry through into my daily life is what it takes to be the best person that I can be.

Ever since I can remember, I wanted to gain knowledge about the world and my mom and dad are the best teachers when it comes to knowing about the "real world." They always supported my endeavors, no matter how seemingly impossible, and I could not possibly put my gratitude into words. My parents are the most important people in my life and they have taught me everything that I could want to know in order to become a wonderful person, both inside and out.

My parents raised me to realize how important people need to be in one's life. For years, I thought that I could grow up and, if I could, never deal with people and their dramatics in my adult life. Through various situations, I would always see the darker side of human nature, preferring to spend time alone rather than with others. Initially, that's why I chose to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. Animals always made more sense to me than human beings. Yet, as I matured and learned from the lessons and values that my parents instilled in me, I came to understand that, even though there are some terrible things that go on in the world as a result of mankind, there are beautiful and wonderful people fighting to make the world go round. Now, at the age of twenty two, I have decided to continue with my dream of veterinary medicine but, I plan to incorporate humanitarian efforts into my life.

After witnessing all of the sacrifices my parents made for myself as well as my other siblings, I know that if I can give back in the world just a small bit, I would do honor to both myself and my parents who always raised me to be the best person that I could be.

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