

Honorable Mention

Amy Geesy

12th grade, Bath High School, Bath Local Schools, Lima

Title: I Think of You

According to Webster's dictionary, inspiration is defined as "a divine influence holding the power to move ones emotions". While this may sound like a huge force that moves a person; I have found my source of inspiration for life amongst 7-11 year olds. For the past two years I have worked at Royal Family Abused and Neglected Kids Camp. Royal Family is a week long camp for children who have been abused, neglected, or both. Around 40 children attend this camp held at a St. Mary's campground and they have the time of their lives.

I originally had intended on bringing myself to camp and sharing all the wisdom that I knew about life with these kids, but I had no idea what they had in store for me. I had never known inspiration until I met these children. No, I would not call them an inspiration, the word does not encompass all that they have taught and continue to teach me. Growing up in a safe, Christian home with a warm, loving family, I had never even given a second thought that life could be any different.

Meeting one 8-year-old girl flipped my thoughts and world upside down. She shared with me a story about what she names the bugs that crawl from her walls and how when she gets to eat, it is so rotten, she douses it with hot sauce to burn away the flavor. Every child that attends Royal Family has a similar story to share but I have not once in two years ever heard one of these children complain about the lives they lead.

Day after day these children come home to parents that physically, mentally, and sexually abuse them-if they come home at all. These kids are so brave though, and when I asked that one little girl how she does it day after day she simply responded, "I think of you".

To describe in words the bravery and will of each child I have met is impossible. These children have no fear of the outside world because the inside is what is scary to them; yet they fight. They don't lay down and take it; they make themselves move on and turn themselves into the most determined, open-minded, lovable children I have ever met.

I can honestly say I have rarely complained in the last two years. The challenges I face in life are nothing compared to what these children have faced, and the obstacles that still lay before them. But, they have a sharp determination that nothing will stand in their way and I know in my heart that they can and will change this world. I want nothing more in my life than to go out and do the same, not only for me, but also for the hopes and dreams of each and every one of those children.

On the last day of camp this year, that same 8-year-old girl and I were talking about our heroes. She talked about her grandma who saved her from her abusive dad and when she asked me who I think about when I think of my hero, I thought honestly and simply responded "I think of you".