

**First Place
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Title: Friendship

"Friends are God's life preservers" so says a message that my mom just recently got from her aunt. To me, friendships are one of the most important things in life. If you didn't have friends, life would be like a yo-yo that only yoed. No one would be there to help you through hard times that you come across. I am very lucky to have had one example of a very good friend who helped me and who, unfortunately, I had to help through very difficult times in our lives. My friend Sam has been there for me since we were two years old. We have gone through many things – good and bad including my parents' divorce and even his mother's death.

It was a sunny morning and my mom and I were going to garage sales. There weren't a lot that day but one ad caught our eye. "MOVING SALE, EVERYTHING MUST GO!" the black print read and it just so happened that this sale was on our street. We didn't buy anything but I ended up getting one of the most valuable things I've ever received. When we arrived, the lady who was having the garage sale was excited to see me and she ran inside and got another boy my age. His mom, Nancy, introduced themselves to us and Sam and I soon became inseparable friends.

That was ten years ago now and it turns out that that moment changed my life. We have been best friends since that day and we have been through a lot together. It is easy to be friends when everything is good but it takes a really good friend to stay with you when you're having trouble. I think that our friendship is actually stronger because of all that has happened to us.

The first major even that happened to us was when my parents got divorced. That was a very depressing time for me. To deal with the sadness, I spent a lot of time with Sam and we did many things to take my mind off my parents like playing baseball and playing chess. Sam let me talk when I needed to and just play when I wanted to.

The way that Sam helped me is very important. I learned the true meaning of loyalty because when I went through hard times, Sam remained my friend and helped me pull through. So the meaning of loyalty to me is to help someone out even though they are going through bad times.

But the true test of our friendship came when something happened that was much worse than a divorce. In the summer of 2001, Sam, his sisters and his mom were on their way to swimming lessons when their car got hit by a gravel truck. Sam and his sisters were injured badly but his mom was critically injured. She died on the way to the hospital. Everyone was devastated about her death. His family was even isolated in the burn unit at Children's Hospital so that the press couldn't reach them. I was one of the first people Sam asked to see while he was there. That meant a lot to me because he asked to see me when he could have seen anyone else in the whole world. Now it was my turn to help him out since he had helped me out before. Even though I was very sad about his mother's death, I tried not to show it so that Sam wouldn't be even sadder. I visited him every time he wanted me to and our family even took him to the funeral from the hospital so that he could leave and go back to the hospital if he needed to. On one of our visits, he was so drugged up that he couldn't even talk very well yet he managed to

beat me in chess! Everyone still teases me about that! I learned many lessons and values but one of the best is that you should try to just put your friend's feelings ahead of your own when you need to. Consideration is essential in a caring friendship.

Even after going through these tragic events we both managed to pull through with each other's help. Some lessons that we learned were that a good friend will always give you emotional and mental support when you need it. Friends are people you can have a good time with and depend on when you need them.

I think everyone has a good friend out there but they just need to meet them and value their gift. When you meet that friend, you will probably enjoy life a lot more. I know that I am grateful that we went to that particular garage sale and that I found a great treasure there – my friend Sam.