

To Whom It May Concern,

Out of all of the scholarship letters that I have written, this one has been by far the most difficult. I find myself hating that this scholarship exists. For if it did not exist, my friend Jenna, would still be here.

Getting back into the pool after Jenna's passing took me a while. I was extremely devastated that she was gone. Swimming did not seem to matter much anymore. I cried most days and wondered what the point was. Why did this happen? Why take someone that was such a hard worker, so positive, touched so many hearts, and one of the greatest friends, out of so many peoples' lives.

As the days passed, I realized that I was going to change my mindset and continue my life with resilience. I was going to make each day more positive and work hard for myself and for Jenna. I debated if I would swim after high school, but then came to the conclusion that Jenna would want that for me and I want to stay focused on my goals. Swimming was one of her passions and being she is not here, I will swim for the both of us! I hit a plateau in swimming, and for those who are not swimmers, this is very hard. You put in your all, working hard at every practice, eating healthy, and then when you go to compete; your time is worse. This can be very deflating for an athlete. Some might just give up, however, I continued to push myself, always thinking of Jenna and how she was not given the chance to swim for college, but how in her short life, she worked hard, and pushed her teammates to continue to do their best.

Ever since I was little, I have always wanted to work with children. During the school years, I volunteered at my church with the Sunday school program. I taught vacation bible school in the summers. I work at the before and after care at a local elementary school. I have been accepted to The College of St. Benedict. Not only will I swim for the college, but I will study pre-med. I will continue my passion of working with children and work towards becoming a pediatrician with a focus in oncology. I want to help children that have been diagnosed with cancer.

Jenna's list is something that hangs in my room and will be in my college dorm room. It is the first thing that I see when I wake up. It reminds me of the person Jenna was and who I strive to be. It is easy to just walk past people in life and not say anything, but I aspire to say hi to strangers. I want to have others see that they matter. I will help my teammates in college, just as Jenna helped her teammates. I will cheer them on and lift them up when they are feeling down. In Jenna's short thirteen years of life, she left her mark in this world. I only hope, that I can make a mark in this world like my friend did.

Regardless if I am awarded this scholarship, I will continue to honor my friend every day. I will work hard, be kind to others, and give compliments to those around me. Jenna may not be with us, but she will forever be in my heart. I will never forget her and I will always be proud to say that Jenna Paschke was my friend.

Madison Slavik