

2011 HS Scholarship Winner

Katryce Lassle

The past four years have helped to define me in a way I never thought high school could. More than any of the friendships I've developed with my peers, my most meaningful relationships have been formed with my teachers. I have had multiple teachers over the years who have gone above and beyond to guide me and help me reach my full potential. Their patient understanding of my medical conditions and their ability to work with me to keep me on track has literally shaped everything from my work ethic to my choice in career.

I owe everything I am to the educational system in which I was raised, and I would love nothing more than to provide this same life-changing guidance to future generations. President Obama had it right in his 2011 State of the Union address when he advised American young people: "If you want to make a difference in the life



of our nation; if you want to make a difference in the life of a child--become a teacher." I plan to earn my Master's and eventually a PhD in English in order to become a college professor. Of course, since becoming a professor takes some time, I plan to teach high school in the meantime - most likely in an underprivileged and/or rural area that is in need of passionate educators.

Because of my experiences with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, I know how difficult my adulthood is going to be when I am constantly battling pain and fatigue. As it is, I can hardly make it a week without falling sick. But mostly, thanks to the help of my teachers, I have learned to both manage and learn from my illnesses in order to prepare myself for the rigor of the future I've planned for myself. I am going to one of the most academically challenging universities in the country, which will make it difficult for me to let myself slow down when my CFS starts acting up--and in my eyes, this is all for the better.

The more I push myself to work through the aches and the tiredness, the more I'm preparing myself to act as a healthy and fully functional member of society throughout my adulthood. I could easily rely on my chronic illness as an excuse to underachieve or coast through life; I could go to a less rigorous college or choose a more flexible career path that would allow me to take time off and let my fibromyalgia get the best of me. But if I did that, I would be short-changing myself and those closest to me. Using CFS as my crutch would mean throwing away the potential that my high school teachers spent so much time and effort helping me build.