

To Whom it May Concern at the Alvin A. Dubin Center:

I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Emily R. McNulty as she grew from curious kindergartener into an exceptionally kind, confident young woman. I hope you have the opportunity to meet her too.

During our early years, Emily would accompany me during late afternoon dog walks throughout the neighborhood. Waiting until I was in sight, with "Grandma" positioned near the open front door (for permission), Emily happily greeted me and asked to come along. Emily would recount her school day activities and all things wonderful as a voracious reader and learner. We sometimes circled the neighborhood twice so Emily could explain all the exciting events of her day. This bright and energetic child was being raised by a single mother who was caring for her elderly mother also. The time Emily shared with me became important, a highlight in my day.

As years passed our conversations expanded from all things school, to include book story lines, homework issues, athletics, relationship/friendship building, family, and daily home life. Those years "Grandma" would be sitting at the front window to wave at us (me, Emily, and dogs) as we ventured forward. I learned from Emily's point of view how "Grandma" was not moving forward (sliding back) and needing help with many tasks that worried her mother.

Emily described assisting "Grandma" with Adult Daily Living Skills by the age of ten. Emily assisted in activities such as bathing, dressing and general care in the morning and evening. This chore grew in necessity as Emily moved through her adolescence. Emily's loving and humorous descriptions of "Grandma" and their antics together brought many smiles.

Our walk frequency changed from daily to every few days. She was an active teenager too! But Emily continued to relay all her life events – just learned to be succinct!

At this time, Emily's mother and I began occasionally walking together during the "last dog walk of the day". I heard about the decline of "Grandma" from another's point of view. The discussion always included how it took a team to care for "Grandma" and how much Emily's mother relied on all the care provided by Emily.

Emily became the center of "Grandma's" life as she engaged in conversation and drew her out of "the stare". The love between them was as evident as the brightness of Mary Ellen's face every time Emily entered the room and her desire to engage in conversation – even if it didn't match – Emily continued to Mary Ellen's delight.

The saddest part of this story is that "Grandma" outlived Emily's mother.

Emily was a thriving student in the autumn of 2021. She put her life on hold to return home to care for her terminally ill mother and "Grandma". Five months she was their primary caregiver. Emily was afforded only two weeks of solo care of her mother in their home following "Grandma's" move into her uncle's household. I was with Emily the last day that her mother was home before spending her final 2 days at the Hospice facility. Emily relayed to me how she missed her grandmother and hoped her uncle, with his wife and his two sisters (aunts), were taking good care of "Grandma".

On that day, Emily revealed how difficult her past five months had been because she was isolated from her friends, only to rely on Facetime/social media to keep in touch with others. Those months Emily dealt with home healthcare personnel and hospice staff for her mother and grandmother. With me, Emily described the emotions that an adult (many years older than she) reveals as they are challenged with the care of a loved one with Alzheimer's and end-of-life.

As Emily faces a new, scary world on her own (no parent, no grandparent, no sibling), her support system is comprised of adults who have been lucky enough to cross paths with her. Emily's future is bright (just ask her) because of her great desire to embrace each day as a joyful, learning experience. We all need an Emily in our life- I'm thankful she chose me!

Thank you for your kind consideration of Emily.

Bernice Kertavage (239-399-1301)