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Grade 10

Forest Hills Northern High School

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Donuts and Books

As I reflect on what makes me proud to be a member of my school, it is impossible not to be overwhelmed by the flood of emotions, memories, and gratitude. You see, my journey in this school is not just about academics or extracurricular activities. It is connected by profound personal experiences that have shaped who I am today.

One of my earliest memories as a husky was at Donuts and Books, an annual event at Collins Elementary in which the school opened an hour earlier and gave out donuts to families while they read together. This event happened shortly after I moved to Grand Rapids, while I was still adjusting to my new life. My dad accompanied me through those daunting halls so we could enjoy sweets and read together. With every bite of my donut, my fear of change was disappearing. Husky Pride was still foreign to me but faces around me were starting to become familiar. I was talking to my classmates and, suddenly, donuts became a gateway for my adjustment to school. That moment was the first of many in my journey as a husky. My dad watched proudly as I spoke with my new friends. To him, it was not about donuts or books, it was about me being happy. That was always his priority.

However, life can be cruelly unpredictable. One fateful day, my dad suffered an accident that robbed him of his memory. The man who once shared my love for literature and sweets was a shadow of his former self, dealing with a reality he could scarcely comprehend from a wheelchair in a nursing home. The warmth of our Donuts & Books sessions faded into the background, replaced by the harsh permanence of his condition.

Amidst the chaos and confusion, it was my school community that became my sanctuary. The hallways that once seemed daunting now offered comfort and support. Teachers, classmates, and staff became pillars of strength, holding me up when I felt like crumbling.

Reflecting on those harsh times reminds me of my pride in calling this school my home. It's not just about the grades or awards we earn; it's about the unwavering support and compassion that fills every corner of this district. Here, I'm not just a student; I'm part of a family—a family that understands the importance of empathy and kindness, especially in times of adversity.

As I walk through the halls, I carry with me the memories of Donuts & Books, the pain of my dad's absence, and the overwhelming gratitude for the community that embraced me when I needed it most. That's what makes me proud to be a member of this school—not just what it has taught me academically, but also the profound lessons of love, resilience, and compassion that have shaped my life.

The last time I visited my father, I brought him warm, glazed donuts. When I entered his room he turned to face me and his eyes met mine, looking but not necessarily seeing. He did not recognize me at first. “Hi dad,” I approached him, holding up the paper bag. His face lit up - somehow, even though he did not remember who I was, he remembered the scent of those donuts and the memories they held.