

I wish to nominate: Julie Wojciewcowicz

I have had the privilege of knowing Julie since her freshman year when she tried out for and became a member of the girls' basketball team. I have seen Julie grow from a mature freshman to a true leader who, during her senior year, was captain of the girls' basketball team. Julie is one of the rare student athletes who "got it" from the beginning. She understands what it means to fully commit to a cause and is willing to lend her talents to the team, even if it means that she sacrifices personal recognition while doing so. Julie is also one of the sweetest young ladies that I have had the privilege of working with during my 13 years as an educator and 17 years as basketball coach.

I hope the high regard in which I hold Julie is obvious. That is why it was so sad to find out this fall that Julie's father was dying from cancer. When you spend as much time around someone as I do with Julie (2 hours a day, 6 days a week during basketball season and every day in school during homeroom) you can sense when something is wrong. Julie was not herself at the start of this year and she told me in September that her father was sick. He passed shortly thereafter in the fall. The grace and dignity in which Julie handled this has amazed not only me and the other faculty members, but her family and friends as well.

Julie has also been extensively involved in the LMHS Thon, which is run by the National Honor Society (NHS). Thon is a fundraiser for the Four Diamonds Society which raises money for the families of kids with cancer. This money is used to offset travel expenses and the other costs associated with caring for a loved one who has been stricken with cancer that insurance does not cover. Julie has been involved with this for the past three years and was a Thon captain this year. As a Thon captain Julie was responsible for getting donations and helping coordinate this all day event. Thon captains would meet weekly over the summer, usually 2 hours every Sunday, and also throughout the school year to ensure that the event runs smoothly. All told the NHS has raised over \$80,000 during this three year period. Julie recently went to Penn State to see Thon first hand. Julie has been accepted to Penn State main campus and is hoping to be able to afford to go to Penn State next year where she can continue to be involved with this excellent cause.

In my opinion Julie's greatest contribution to her community and the people around her has been accomplished by being the type of person that the community can be proud of and by being the type of person that those who know her well truly admire. Julie is not only the captain of the basketball team; she is also the captain of the soccer team as well. The fact that two different coaches both selected her to be captain is not a coincidence. When I had discussed Julie with her soccer coach (John Oberholzer), his comment was "what a great person". When Anthony Tamaccio, her physics teacher and senior class sponsor asked me how the team was shaping up, Julie's name came up and his first comment was "Julie's the best". Those comments, from two respected colleagues have stuck with me because they were honest gut reactions from two people who speak the truth and do not sugar coat things when it comes to their opinions of people.

Prior to this year I had only gotten to know Julie as an athlete, competitor and person. In August I was thrilled when I saw that she was on my roster for Honors Calculus. I have learned that the

same qualities she has displayed on the court; leadership; discipline; integrity; and hard work combined with her natural ability to maximize her talents have carried over to the class. Julie has put in the time necessary to transform herself from a B- student at the start of the year to become an A-/A student by the end of the year. Her determination to not miss a beat during her father's illness and death as well as her continued commitment to her studies (no small feat for a 2nd semester senior who has already been accepted to multiple schools) demonstrate that Julie is intrinsically motivated and mature enough to handle the responsibilities that come with being a freshman in college. What also speaks volumes to her character is that not once did she ever try to use her father's illness as an excuse. For seniors the first semester grades are very important. Julie recognized that she still needed to excel in the class to get accepted into the college of her choice and she did it. This was another example of Julie recognizing a hurdle and getting past it. In an indirect way she also demonstrated to her friends in school what it means to stay committed and focused on a goal during trying times.

I would like to give you some first person insights to the type of person that Julie is and the reasons that I am convinced that Julie will be the type of outstanding young woman that I know she will become. I also believe that if she were to be awarded the Alan Bell Memorial Award that it truly would be an investment in the future of one of our students and not just an award that was won by a student:

Julie's work ethic:

In addition to her academic and athletic achievements on school she has held down two jobs since her junior year to so that she would not have to ask her parents for money for team camps, proms etc. When we were going to basketball team camp last year, while most students asked their parents for the \$180 needed, Julie worked for it. By my calculations at \$8.00 and before taxes, she needed to work over 30 hours to pay for camp. That is a lot of time for a young person to sacrifice. This is just one example like this that I am aware of.

Julie the person:

During one of our summer league games last year Julie had a rough game and was getting frustrated. In a moment of frustration she tried to walk away from me while I was talking to her. After "politely" letting her know that you don't do things like that she returned, listened and played a solid game. By the time I got home she had called twice but did not leave a number. (my wife said the phone rang a few times but that she did not recognize the number on the caller ID) By the third time she called I was home. She wanted to let me know that she felt horrible and "had to" apologize. Knowing Julie as well as I do I was not surprised, but my wife was amazed. There are not too many 16 year old students who would feel bad enough to call, not once but three times, until she actually got hold of me. This speaks volumes to her character and integrity.

Julie's compassion:

I have two examples, I am almost embarrassed by the first because it pales in comparison to the second example, but it also speaks to the type of person she is. Last year we had lost in the playoffs to a team that we should have beaten. As a coach I was devastated. Julie stopped by the next day during one of my free periods when no one else was around to make sure that I was

okay. She was the only player to do so. I could see that she genuinely felt bad for me. This was a random act of kindness that just reinforced how good of a person she is. The second example happened just recently and I don't know if Julie is aware that I know about it. Another student had recently lost her mother and Julie has made it point to talk with the student. I don't know who the student is or what was said, but the fact that she was willing to share her experiences and pains once again speaks volumes to the type of person she is and the compassion that she has for others.

Julie the daughter:

When this award was announced I asked her mother if there was anything that I could share about how Julie had touched the lives of others. Here is some of what she shared with me about how Julie had touched her life: "Julie was especially helpful to me during her father's illness. She gave me the gift of time with my husband which is priceless. Her maturity allowed me to stay at the hospital for 17 nights while Joe was sick. Knowing that she would see to the household running smoothly... lifted the burden of one more concern. Also the gift to my husband, her dad, of my time spent with him so he could have the love and support which was most important in his last few weeks. Julie was also helpful in caring for her father in his last 5 days while he was home on hospice. Having the time with my husband is a precious memory that I will hold onto forever."

In closing I would just like to say that of all the students that I have ever coached or taught I hope it is clear why Julie has absolutely become one of my all time favorites. When you think about why you teach or coach, Julie is the type of student who you want to do your best for because she deserves nothing less. That in turn will hopefully have a positive influence the lives of the other young people that I work with. Perhaps the greatest compliment I can give Julie is that she is the type of young woman that I hope my two daughters (1st grade and almost 2 yrs old) grow up to be like.

Nominated by:
Richard Becker

Relationship to nominee:
Teacher: 12th grade Calculus
Homeroom Advisor: 10th – 12th grades
Basketball Coach: 9th – 12th grades

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