

Alan Bell Memorial Award Nomination Application

I wish to nominate: myself.

First Name: Lindsey

Last Name: Yam

What adversity/hardship the student has experienced and when?

In my junior year of high school, my grandma was diagnosed with a brain tumor. It was the size of a fist in her head, and it was making her sick. The actual diagnosis of the brain tumor took months for the doctors to find out. It was my mother who first noticed my grandma's hallucinations. My grandma claimed there were people outside, in the trees watching us, waiting to take us away. She would forget our names. When her hallucinations would get worse, she would lash out at us in anger. I remember hiding in other rooms so that my family wouldn't see me cry. I had to be strong for them because if I wasn't, who would be? Who would protect my younger sisters?

School became difficult to deal with. I had issues concentrating during class. Most of the time, I was sleep deprived due to my sleeping arrangements. I would sleep in the same room with my grandma at night and help her to the bathroom several times in the middle of the night because she would be too weak to walk herself. I quit all after school activities so that I could help my mom take care of her at home, which made homework all the more difficult. I stayed home most of the time, taking care of my family. I remember my grades starting to fall and the late nights studying to get them back up again. My most favorite and challenging subjects became almost unbearable, but I was determined to succeed. I wanted to be strong.

My family and I made constant trips to hospitals. We pleaded the doctors to find out what was wrong with her. It was heartbreaking to see my grandma in the state she was in. My grandma is a strong woman. She survived the communist war with Pol Pot in Cambodia and got her family safe to America. Everyone in our family venerated her. Here she was lying in a hospital bed, weak and thin, watching all of us fall apart as they told us she had a brain tumor and they would need to remove it. There is no such thing as a surgery without risks, especially one as delicate as a brain surgery. I couldn't tell what was worse: knowing what was wrong with her or not knowing at all.

The surgery went successfully and, slowly but surely, my grandma began to regain her strength. She never fully regained her strength, but she is much stronger now. The hallucinations faded with time, and she is lively and energetic once more. My mother and I still have to watch over her, but we are well adjusted and the workload of both home duties and school has become more bearable.

Please describe (as much as you can, please take up space as needed):
How the nominee has made a significant difference in the life of another person/people/community?

Due to family situation, I couldn't have as much of an impact as I wanted to in my community. Most of the time, I found myself at home, taking care of my family. I believe that I made the most impact there, to my sisters especially.

Because both my parents work full time, so they were often unable to transport my sisters and me back and forth to club events or sports. They were always busy with work, which was wholly understandable, but it made extracurricular activities much more difficult to handle. I didn't join as many school clubs as I wanted so as to not bother them so much when they were already stressed with work. Once my grandma became sick and my mother quit her job to watch her, everything became more difficult to manage. My mother had to watch over my grandma constantly, which meant she had to be home most of the time. In order to help her, I quit my extracurricular activities, which negatively impacted me since I had less to offer to the colleges that were looking for well rounded students who were well involved. However, I do not regret my decision.

While I was unable to continue with my sports and clubs, I was determined to make sure my sisters did continue on with their activities. I felt that they shouldn't be affected by our family situation. I encouraged both of them to continue their extracurricular activities. I didn't want them to quit what they enjoyed doing after school, so I worked a little harder at home. Each day after school, I came home and took over my mother's shift at taking care of grandma. By that time, she would be quite exhausted, so she would rest. My little sisters would come home either by the late bus, rides from friends, or my mother, who would be able to pick them up since I was home watching grandma.

The school year after, I encouraged my little sisters and said that they should get more involved and join whatever they wanted to. I'm proud to say that my youngest sister plays the clarinet now. She's been in a lot of concerts that I unfortunately am unable to go to, but my mom and my little sister go to see her play. My other sister is now on the track team. She also plays the viola. I was still unable to join any clubs or sports, but I don't regret it the slightest if I can see them come home late after school smiling and excitedly telling me what they did that day.

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