

### **What will receiving the award mean to you?**

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude for being compared to a person as compassionate and gifted as Alan Bell. His story is truly inspirational, and I'm amazed at how much he accomplished in life regardless of his adversity. I am truly honored to be nominated for an award such as this one.

Receiving this award would be a great help financially to my family and myself. Currently, I play a large role in maintaining my household. I take care of my grandma most of the time at home. My parents constantly deal with financial worries as well as taking care of my sisters, my grandmother, and me. For my first year of college at Temple University, I was encouraged by my mother and father to dorm. Worried about my education and the area Temple was located in, they wanted me to become familiar with the area and concentrate on school. However, dorming is expensive, and I worry the sudden shift for my parents will be too stressful on them. I worry for the extra duties both my parents and little sisters will inherit once I am gone for college. I also worry for the extra financial stress college will place on my family. I am the first child in my family to go to college. Because both my parents did not finish college themselves, they are especially driven to make sure I finish and complete my education, no matter what the costs. However, both my parents maintain a small deli, and I see them struggle to make ends meet at times. To receive this award would mean less financial worries for my parents. It will provide a less stressful transition, because my going to college is not only a great change in my life. It is also a great change in theirs, and I want to make it as comfortable for my family as I possibly can.

### **How have you grown through adversity?**

I admit that I had not gone through my transition smoothly. Going from this almost easygoing teenage lifestyle to a one suddenly filled with duties and responsibilities weren't easy to conquer. I remember the first few days of taking care of my grandma, I felt exhausted and stressed as anything. I wouldn't sleep. I would simply lay there in bed, staring up at the ceiling, wondering what my family and I did wrong to deserve my grandma's sudden illness. What did we do to deserve all the stress of extra medications, constant hospital visits and my grandma's lashing out at us?

Looking back on my past self, I would say that I was spoiled. I didn't do much. I was sloppy, lazy, unmotivated, and I lacked passion. I lacked drive. After the initial struggle, I found myself easing into my new lifestyle. My short temper snuffed out, and I grew more patient. Patience was important. It was important to realize that I wasn't the one who struggled the most here. My grandma was. She was the one going in and out of the hospital. She was the one who lost most of her strength and couldn't do most of the things she did before. Patience was important when dealing with her. As I eased into my new lifestyle, I eased my grandma into hers. The more patience and dedication I had with taking care of her, the more she was comfortable.

Along with patience, I learned organization and time management. I didn't expect my adversity to push me into becoming a better student. With all the medication and requirements my grandma needed to maintain her health, I learned the importance of organization. I made lists and charts of her medication and my daily duties. Mornings would be clockwork patterns of giving medication, taking blood sugar, giving my grandma her Advair and Spiriva, and making her breakfast. With a more organized schedule, the anxiety slowly started to dissipate, and I could sleep again. The lists and schedules made duties easier for my family as well, as they could easily take over my duties if I was absent.

Probably the most important change in me was my passion and motivation to pull my family out of this dark, deep pit of depression we seemed to fall into. I saw the slow slip into hopelessness we all seemed to have. The hope of returning to normal completely vanished, and what the future held was frightening. Everyone, from my parents, to my grandma, to even my little sisters, was affected. We grew quiet and

anxious. The anxiety grew into anger, and the anger led to outbursts. We were crumbling, and I wouldn't stand by and watch quietly as we fell. I surprised myself. I felt myself almost automatically becoming more energetic and cheerful. I acted as such until the rest of my family started to shift towards a more positive viewpoint. I pushed away the pessimism and fears and took on hope. With hope came passion. 'My family can never go back to what we were before. Nothing can be the same, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing. We can become closer and stronger together. We can make it out of this.' I told myself those words each and every day and poured myself into making sure those words came true.

### **How have you impacted the lives of others in significant ways?**

As I stated in my earlier essay, I believe I made the most impact in my home. I encouraged my little sisters to take up more extracurricular activities and get involved in school while I would stay home and help my mother take care of my grandma. Since I'm the oldest of my sisters, I work closely with my parents and help advise them on how they can better prepare my younger sisters for the future.

Although I was limited in how much outside influence I could have, I'm proud to say that I was able to impact some people in school. During my stressful transition and adjustment to my new responsibilities, I became more forward in my thoughts. At the time, it was good for me to be outward with my emotions with my family because hiding my emotions would provoke later conflicts. As time passed, I continued to grow more outspoken. Once school started, I surprised most of my friends in becoming more active in school and class. I wouldn't be afraid to raise my hand or speak my thoughts, despite them being different than others. I simply did not have the insecurity I once had. I now had confidence in my thoughts, my ideas, and my way of doing things. If one of my friends wanted to raise their hand but were too shy to ask the teacher, I would either give them a little push to 'go ask him. It's what he's there for' or even ask the question for them. In time, I realized I had to push some of my friends to participate less and less. They became more comfortable in class and with asking questions or participating. I also became more outward in my artistic and literary ideas. While I was taking care of my grandma, I would draw and write a lot. Art was a stress outlet for me. It allowed me to relax and enjoy myself as I created stories upon stories. For a majority of the time, I wrote and drew alone. Not many of my friends were artistic. Needless to say, I was ecstatic when I convinced two of my friends to write a story with me. None of us were able to go into art classes, but all of us had a quiet passion for it. Together, we were able to help each other improve in art and writing. We've written probably over fifty pages and have yet to be finished, and we plan to continue to write together after high school has ended.