

## Leah McCall- John Paul II- McAuley High School

When I read the story about Aubrey, it amazed me that a little girl of 3 years old could have such a big impact on others. When I saw the pictures of Aubrey, I could not help but smile, and be inspired by her story. It is important to me that I can have a positive influence on others as well.

Throughout our lives we meet thousands of different people. Some we may forget and others leave a mark on us forever. Sometimes we meet people and we have a big impact on their lives and we don't even know it. I was lucky enough to be one of those people who left a mark on others lives.

Last summer I had the opportunity to go on a service trip with ten students from Mercy High School because my mom teaches there, and she was one of the chaperones. We went to Fremont, Ohio and stayed with the Sisters of Mercy for five days. While there I met Pat. She was staying there to attend her sister's funeral. Her sister had been a Mercy nun for over 70 years. Pat was once a former nun herself. Every morning at breakfast we were invited to sit with the nuns and get to know them. They were all very amazing people. The stories that they shared about themselves just astounded me.

One morning my mom and I sat down at a table with a man and a woman. His name was Barry and her name was Pat. She told us why she and her husband Barry were there. She was very interested in me, and where I was going to go for high school. She was a sweet lady and I felt as if I had known her my whole life. Each night at dinner I looked forward to telling Pat what I had experienced on that days' service outing. Pat had shared with me how much she loved strawberry pie, and on that day we had spent the afternoon with an Amish family, and had a delicious meal where we ate, of all things, strawberry pie for dessert! I remember how excited Pat was to hear about it, and how much she laughed when she heard about the pie.

On another outing to a day camp program for developmentally challenged adults, I met Gerry. He was so outgoing and friendly. He came up to me right away and started asking me why I was there. He asked if I liked to sing, and could we sing together at the fire ring.

I remember when he said to me, "Do you smile a lot?"

I said, "I try to."

He replied, "Well you should because you have a beautiful smile."

I laughed and then smiled again. This experience showed me that something small that I say or do can have a big impact on someone even if I don't realize it at the time.

On our last day during dinner, Pat thanked me for always wanting to talk to her. She said I made her feel happier, even though she was going through a sad

time. She invited me to come visit her in Virginia. She even sent me all kinds of brochures from Richmond, Virginia where she lives. I also sent her a bunch of things special from Cincinnati. It's funny how one person can really have a big impact on your life. If I wouldn't have gone on that service trip, and if Pat hadn't been there for her sister's funeral we would never have met. I would never have gotten to hear all her amazing stories. She didn't have to use words to show how grateful she was to have met me. Even though we'd only known each other five days I left a mark on her and she helped me to appreciate others more and not always take things for granted.

I see every day how I can be a positive influence on my five-year-old brother, Quin. He is always repeating the things he sees me say or do for others such as: when I hold a door open for someone, or say hello to someone. Or, how I help my first grade "little buddy" at school when I try to set a good example for her when we go to church. It's clear to me the little things I do for others matter.

In closing, I want to thank you for this wonderful opportunity to share my experiences, and if I am chosen, to be able to contribute in some way toward the cost of my education.