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One of my favorite quotes is, “The smile on my face doesn’t mean my life is perfect. I just appreciate what I have and what God has blessed me.” This quote holds a lot of meaning in my life. Fortunately, God has blessed me with many wonderful people in my life and with many things. My most prized gift is the gift of life and being able to help others. Aubrey Rose was given this gift of life on Earth for only three years. In those three treasured years, she made a difference in the world and to the people she was around. I strive to make a positive difference in the world around me.

I first learned about the Aubrey Rose Foundation when I was younger. I auditioned and was picked to be a model in the Aubrey Rose Fashion Show. At the audition, I still remember watching the video about Aubrey’s life and how she fought through the hard times. Throughout her struggles, she always had a smile on her face and that was reflected on the faces of others. A smile is one of the most powerful things in life. I was so excited and enjoyed being a model in the fashion show. I know that the donations that I earned and the admission to the show would be used to help children with medical expenses and have a chance to better life.

A smile can sometimes mean everything to someone in need. My grandpa recently had open heart bypass surgery. It was a really tough time for my family because that was a very serious surgery. We were not sure that my grandpa would make it through the surgery. We were blessed that he made it and I was able to visit him a few days later. The first thing he did when he saw me was smile. That smile let me know that he was okay and feeling better. I carried that smile and joy to my family and others around me. The smile that was shown on my grandpa’s face made my day. It let me, my family, and friends know that he was going to be okay.

At IHM school, we learn at a young age what the meaning of service is. I actively participate in projects that we have at school to bring joy to others. I have helped make blankets for children in the hospital. I have made cards for some of the lonely people in our parish. I have collected food for the food drive at Thanksgiving time. I have donated my own money to the Heart to Heart and Catholic Social Services collections. With my classmates, I actively participated in rake and run to help bring a smile to the face of some of the neighbors who see their yard cleaned up without even asking. One small act of kindness can make someone’s day and show them that you really care about them. I helped create gift tags for the giving trees at church. To help at church, I have been an altar server for the past two years. Even though I can’t always see the people I am giving to, I know that my service helps puts a smile on their face.

I believe that smiling is contagious. God created happiness on Earth and that happiness starts with a smile. This smile not only brings joy to you but to others around you. I choose to start my day happy and trying to be a good role model for others. I am the type of person who likes to care for others, be nice to everyone, and include everyone in activities. As a result of this, I have been awarded the Christian Steward Award each year for the past three years. I have worked hard to act in the way God wants me to act. I will continue to be kind toward others and a role model when I attend McNick.

Another way I enjoy helping people is by volunteering outside of school. One activity that allows me to make a difference is being a Girl Scout. I have been in scouts for 8 years. We are now the oldest troop in our school and the younger girls really look up to us. We have helped the younger girls earn badges, put on social events, sell cookies, and learn what being a Girl Scout is really about. Another volunteer activity I did was to donate my hair to Pantene Beautiful Lengths. This organization helps women fighting cancer receive real-hair wigs. It took me a long time to grow my hair out so that I could donate eight inches of hair. It was worth it in the end because I know that I helped someone smile and feel beautiful with a wig. I am planning on joining the service club at McNick so that I can continue to find different ways reach out and help others.

Not only do I like helping people but I also enjoy helping animals. My family and I volunteer at the League for Animal Welfare (LFAW) – a no kill shelter. We go to the LFAW and walk and play with the dogs, and pet the cats. The animals love the attention and it makes them more social and easier to get adopted. We also foster cats through the League's bottle feeding program. When kittens are abandoned by their mothers, we are called to give the kittens a temporary home and to bottle feed them. Also, if there are mother cats that need a place to give birth and care for the young kittens, we provide them a nice room and a loving home.

I love spending time with younger children and babysitting the neighbors' children. I enjoy every time I go over there because I am always greeted by the boys running up to me, giving me a big hug, and screaming my name. I feel honored to say that my presence of coming over there puts such a big smile on their face. When babysitting, I help them with homework, play games, and try to be good role model. Last spring, I decided that I wanted to make some money and be a soccer referee. I love playing soccer because it is my favorite sport. I first started playing soccer when I was only four years old. I chose to referee the younger age groups because I like to teach them what I have learned about playing soccer. Refereeing this age group is so much fun because they don't care what the score of the game is - they just want to have fun. In the game's I referee, I look at these four and five year olds and remember, life isn't about the score, it's about having fun and making a difference in someone's life.

As I learned, Aubrey Rose had one magical power which was her magnificent smile. Her smile led to many other smiling. Just one simple grin can make a difference. I hope to continue bringing smiles, joy, and make a difference to the people around me like Aubrey Rose. I want to keep affecting the people in my family and community in a positive way. "I just appreciate what I have and what God has blessed me."