

Shannon Seiler- Saint Vivian School- Roger Bacon High School

“It is hard to stop loving the ocean. Even after it’s left you gasping and salty.” – Sarah Kay. The “ocean’s” name is Taylor; she is 21 years old, is in a wheelchair, and is adopted. We met last year for the first time, and she says I’m her sister.

I was working the front desk and snack bar of North Hills Swim and Tennis Club. Taylor and I had been talking, or more she was talking and I was listening in the entryway. I learned that she just graduated high school at 21, but couldn’t make any plans for college or a real job because she constantly needs to be monitored for health reasons. I offered her a co-working position with me, and we talked to my boss. By the next week, Taylor was put on the schedule working shifts with me. We set systems for working the snack bar to adjust to Taylor’s mental and physical needs. For example, she would get monetary values mixed up with each other so I dealt with the money part of the job. With her being in a wheelchair, Taylor couldn’t reach things that were kept on the top shelves or on the ground freezer so, I would be in charge of those items.

As we formed a closer friendship, Taylor began opening up to me about her mental diagnoses, including anxiety and depression. I listened as she told me numerous accounts of bullying and court cases that she had to go through at multiple schools. I realized that Taylor didn’t need just a job; she needed a friendly, loyal face that would stand by her and make her smile.

Every day I e-mail her, checking to see how she is and to make sure she is okay. For the days when she’s on the brink of falling apart and disaster, it becomes my job to help her. Taylor lost her best friend last year due to his condition, following many more tragedies she has to face mostly on her own. I’m one person who helps her overcome and move past these scarring events in her life.

I am the ears who listen and a constant shoulder on which to cry. In my opinion, making an impact means changing a person’s life so as he or she will always remember. I make an impact when I pull someone out of the deepest depths of their

minds. By simply telling someone “I’m here for you”, “I’ll listen”, or “You can always talk to me,” I say that I am trustworthy and loyal. I’m saying that no matter what happens, I’ll always be there when the waves get too rough, even when he or she has made a huge mistake. I’m passionate when I’m trying to change a person’s life for the better because I know he or she needs help. When people are stubborn and drowning in two feet of water but they won’t listen when you tell them to stand up, it’s frustrating. But I make an impact by staying. I make an impact by taking that another step further and picking up the pieces when they’ve been pushed over the edge and shattered.

This is how I make an impact. There needs to be more people who can open their eyes and see when people are steps away from a mental breakdown and know how to save them. I want to continue making an impact on lives but I also want others to learn how to do the same.