

August 18, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request that you consider a hardship exemption for the 2015-2016 school year for Andrew Stewart. I am Andrew's guardian and he has been living with me and my husband for a full year now. When Andrew came to live with us, he had spent the previous two years in ever increasing instability with his family. During his freshman year the family moved three times and Andrew attended three high schools, one of them twice. Due to this instability, loss of employment for his parents and a secure home to live in Andrew floundered scholastically, socially and emotionally.

In this past year Andrew has matured greatly. He accepted responsibility for some inappropriate actions and behaviors while with his family. With advocates in his corner, he faced the consequences of his actions in juvenile court. He attends weekly group counseling and has forged a strong bond with his counselor and the other young men in the group. He has only missed a session due to vacation plans and once football practice started in the evenings. He has been allowed to make different arrangements for his counseling during the football season because of the progress and commitment he has made. He even insisted upon attending his counseling session the same day that he had his wisdom teeth pulled. Andrew is also working on completing 40 hours of community service, working at a stable outside of town. He cleans stalls, cleared blackberries, built fence, hauled and stacked hay and any other jobs the stable owner has asked of him. He loves being around the animals and is very at home in this setting. For a few months after being removed from his family, he lived with my parents in Redmond on their farm. He was a great help to them and also to the neighbor next door. They kept a market goat on their property for him while teaching him about raising goats. He participated in their 4-H club and in the county fair where he placed very well with his goat. He learned a lot about being a part of a group and working together for individual and group goals. He was able to sell his goat at the auction and was very proud of his involvement.

Andrew came to live with us just a few weeks prior to the beginning of the school year. The first semester of his sophomore year started well but admittedly he again floundered for a bit. Andrew is a person who best learns by his experiences and mistakes. It was sometimes difficult for him to listen to or accept direction, mostly because he had never had much of that in his life. He had learned a lot in the 'school of hard knocks'. He was distracted by the unsettled issue with the juvenile court and the length of time it took to bring some resolution to that. He missed his family and yet we had to learn how much contact to allow because of the affects this had on his behavior and emotional well-being. Much of this time was spent in our learning how to live cohesively as a family unit. We have no other children but have known and loved Andrew his entire life. We briefly had guardianship of him from two days after his birth until he was 8 months old. However, we never had him living with us after that time for more than a week during a vacation. At the beginning of the school year and through the first semester, Andrew was re-establishing old friendships from grade school (he lived in the Forest Grove area for many of his first 8 years), forging new friendships and trying to figure out many other areas of his life. We were learning how best to help him during this time and sometimes, that meant letting him make mistakes so that he could and would learn from them. During this time, the matters in the juvenile court were brought to a point where he fully realized the mistakes made, the consequences for those mistakes and what he needed to do to move forward in his life in a more positive manner. The judge was stern but compassionate with him. He realized that many people cared about the outcome of his

situation and were standing alongside him in his journey. The judge challenged him with regard to his grades during the first semester and made it very clear that these were not acceptable and he must do better. Andrew took this to heart.

About this time, Andrew asked if we could find a physician for him that he could talk to about whether he might have ADD. He felt that he could do better in school, but he also felt that he was too easily distracted (which was also pointed out by some of his teachers) and that perhaps he needed some help. The physician had us fill out a questionnaire and asked one of his teachers to do so as well. Based upon our answers and Andrews answers to questions, the physician did feel that medication would help. We tried a couple of different dosages before Andrew felt comfortable with the results. He had issues with his sleep and with eating patterns at first, but he handled those well and really seemed to settle in at school. He found that if he used his time wisely during school, he could get most of his work done while there. He did continue to need prompting and reminding, but once he found that he could be successful, he worked hard to turn things around and was able to complete the semester with a 3.00 GPA. He also attended summer school and completed the requirements for recovering his freshman English credit. He also studied for his drivers permit and was able to pass that in April and is looking forward to getting his driver's license later this fall. We know, and Andrew knows, that he has more to make up, but he now feels that he can actually accomplish this. We will work with the school to help him recover more credits in this next year. His older sister fell short of graduating this past year and so now Andrew also has a goal of being the first in his family to graduate high school.

By allowing Andrew to participate with the football team this year, you will allow him to continue to mature, to be motivated in his school work and to grow in his relationships with friends, coaches and teachers. The comradery with his teammates through last school year and this summer have helped him in making better life choices. He has more interaction with good kids than he has ever had in his life and they also help him in this journey. We are very excited for Andrew's future and we would greatly appreciate him being allowed to not only practice but to play alongside his teammates this season. Thank you kindly for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Cathy Kohanes
Kelvin Kohanes