

Dear Madams and Sirs.

My daughter Emalee Ell is a Junior who transferred to St. Paul High School just this last month.

It was not without extreme consideration of her circumstances that we made the decision. Over the last year there were several events that took place of which Emalee did not have control.

First off she had transferred to Newberg while living with her grandmother who had also become her educational surrogate. Reasons being the educational opportunities that were offered as well as the chance to experience a better consistent support system utilizing the structure of Newberg over her home school of Dayton High. While attending at Dayton she struggled with academics and was not finding adequate support. One other plus was that Emalee had been playing club soccer and had built strong friendships with the team. Friendships that were based on the team bond and not based on our income, who her brothers were or what position I held in the community.

Unfortunately again circumstances changed and there were not enough girls in her age group still playing for the following club season. Emalee tried out for a Salem/Keizer team and made the cut.

She was a Forward as well as a Keeper. Following two consecutive bunionectomys. She returned to the team and was a force to be faced. She had helped push her team to a regional championship in California after winning the Directors Cup. It was a busy year. But Emalee loved soccer so much and was very good at it. She had plans to go to a junior college and then continue playing while working up to play on the woman's national team. She had big dreams of finishing school and going all the way to the Olympics or maybe even the World Cup.

However in a blink of an eye her dream was lost as she sustained a major concussion in a club game causing her to have constant headaches, dizziness, sleepless and sleepiness, as well as memory and vision issues. All of this greatly affected her cognitively, she was not able to retain day to day instruction. And had lost a significant amount of her previous memories. With all of this she became withdrawn, and did not feel she had a reason to look ahead in life. She had always been an athlete.

She had always competed in upper level leagues. To her there was nothing for her anywhere.

Her friends from soccer did not know how to be supportive as it was so hard to get her out of her depressed state. The neurologist and her Specialist at OHSU had encouraged her to find another sport or other interest to keep her active physically and to get her through her grieving process for her huge loss. Newberg was helpful offering a 504 plan with support of a tutor and incredible administrative support as well. She started seeing a counselor and then a psychologist earlier this fall which helped with some of the depression. She had also become friends with a group of kids from St. Paul a group of kids that did not care where she had been as an athlete who her brothers or parents were.

A third disappointment came just recently. Her grandmother who had been fighting stage four breast cancer and was in remission had developed a tumor in her brain. The stress from this was devastating to Emalee. And also to the whole family. It was a choice again not one she could make but which we all had to make to give her grandmother time to heal without the worry of her teen granddaughters care.

I want you to understand that all of these events and circumstances were beyond Emalee's control.

She was struggling so hard emotionally and socially that she had been having useless thoughts of herself. She did try but was just going through the motions of each day and not feeling worth anything. She sat alone at lunch and did not interact with peers in class. She felt her 504 called attention to her as if she was not intelligent.

As a parent I saw everything she was not eating and she was not doing anything but going to school and work. We tried to invite friends to do things but she had excuses why she would break the plans. I spoke with her psychologist who suggested another move for the best. I did not want to transfer her back to Dayton where she didn't have support and the influences were all sports biased. She needed a more academic environment and positive influential friends. I wished for her to enjoy high school as I did. I knew she wanted to finish her school years feeling important and part of something. With St. Paul not having a soccer program it has been easier for her to find other ways to relate with her peers.

We hope that here Emalee will continue to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

We believe that Emalee will find activities and possibly another sport to enjoy and become who she was meant to be. A fulfilled well rounded young lady.

Thank you so much for every opportunity you offer our youth, I am hoping with this small glimpse into my daughter Emalee's past you can help her to achieve a positive and bright future.

Looking ahead for the best always,

Mrs. Fauna Ell