



Alyssa Spelgatti Josh

Alyssa has seen more in her lifetime than many of us ever will. When Alyssa's parents separated, her mother began working 14-16 hour days, and Alyssa ended up taking care of her younger sister, who was frequently hospitalized with severe asthma. It is during this time that Alyssa spent a lot of time with her grandparents, a time that Alyssa cherishes to this day.

In addition to these challenges, Alyssa has previously been hospitalized for severe depression. She dropped out of school for a time before entering Providence Hospital's Discovery program. Now in foster care, she is finally optimistic for the future. She is working through her relationship with her mother and half brothers, and maintains a 3.84 cumulative GPA as a junior at East High. She is passionate about her academics and eagerly embraces new challenges.

In spite of the extraordinarily difficult situations she has faced, Alyssa has incredibly managed to find time to volunteer and help others. For the past year and a half, Alyssa has offered solace and comfort to the residents at the Prestige Care and Rehabilitation Center of Anchorage (formerly the Mary Conrad Center). Every Saturday, she spends her afternoon with the elderly patients. She used to spend the majority of her time with Alice, a resident who did not have any family in Alaska. They spent hours scrapbooking Alice's photos and playing her favorite game of Bingo. Alice recently passed away, and Alyssa feels her absence acutely.

The path ahead is clear for Alyssa now: she wants to pursue an occupation she loves that will allow her to live a lifestyle that won't cause basic needs like food or heat ever to be in jeopardy. As such, she plans to remain in Alaska and eventually become a teacher. Inspired by her foster parents, Alyssa is determined to make contributions to her community by committing "random acts of kindness."

This award was made for students like Alyssa, and it is my genuine pleasure to recognize this fine young lady tonight.