



(Dakota was unable to attend the Banquet so his Grandmother (center) accepted the Award on his behalf; also pictured Bonnie Johnson, who nominated Dakota.)

Dakota Emery

If you could choose one word to describe Dakota, it would be “survivor.” “Humble” would be another option. Regardless of how he is described, the truth of the matter is that Dakota has experienced immense suffering, loss, and heartbreak and has still managed to excel at school and keep a positive, optimistic attitude.

At the end of his sophomore year, Dakota’s mother died. He also endured the loss of his brother. Now Dakota’s grandmother, who has cared for him since an early age, has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Her only dream is to live long enough to see her beloved grandson graduate from high school.

A kid like Dakota would have every reason in the world to be angry. But that’s not the case for this young man. When asked about his challenges, Dakota just shrugs and says “that’s life.” He has succeeded at a level that would be considered above average for any student, much less one that has faced down personal tragedy and circumstance. His teachers describe him as exceptionally gifted and talented. His cumulative GPA of 3.85 is testament to his academic success, but his work with Chugiak High School’s Peer Mediation program also reveals a caring, thoughtful individual who wants to bring people together.

Dakota’s goal is to become a forensic scientist FBI profiler or psychologist. Given his natural abilities and deep-rooted determination to put one foot in front of the other and keep going, few doubt he will achieve to whatever he sets his mind.

Koty had a very special opportunity this week to go on a tour with the Chugiak Orchestra so he's in Hawaii right now. So, Ms. Bonnie Johnson, Koty's counselor and person who nominated Koty for this Award, will be his Proxy tonight. Please welcome Ms. Johnson.