

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16 is a verse I reflect on each day. As I approach my final year at Barren County High School, I reflect on the laughs, the successes, and experiences that have helped me shine over the past four years. I have grown as a student, as a friend, and as a Christian. As I strive to be a “light” to others around me, I am confident that my high school journey has strengthened my character and given me opportunities to shine. I have learned to take initiative, to improve my skill and knowledge mastery, and to value teamwork. I am proud of my accomplishments, but with much humility I attribute my successes to my faith; with confidence, I look forward to a future that includes continuing my education, but more importantly, a future that points others to Jesus.

As a freshman I remember feeling like the world revolved around ME! I was very eager to enter high school and experience the next stepping stone of my educational journey. I was very carefree and had little worries. After all, my parents had always sacrificed to ensure my life was pleasant and were swift to offer a solution when I was faced with stressful situations. In fact, my worries were limited to, “chocolate or vanilla”, “iPhone or Samsung.” I HAD IT MADE! After sailing through the first couple of years of high school I began to realize I was not taking ownership of my life. I was not in control, my parents were and I was only a spectator. I felt like I had reached a turning point. I began assuming responsibility for my studies including studying independently and managing responsibilities using a daily planner to prioritize my time and use it more efficiently. It was time for me to take more responsibility, rather than depending on my parents to enable me. I have grown tremendously! I have been able to balance playing high school sports, while taking high school and college courses. I have maintained a 4.0 GPA

and remained active in my local church youth group, and took the time to complete service projects because I took initiative to set goals for myself and gained independence.

As the days of high school seemed to speed by in a flash, I was midway through my sophomore year when I found myself in a history class under the direction of Matt Gardener. As he uniquely voiced his well thought-out interpretation of past historical events, he spoke of successes and failures of well-known leaders across the country. His unique approach to teaching (that was loved by all students) sparked me to reflect on my own successes and failures. I wanted to explore a new skill and seek knowledge mastery in the area of baking. I sought out the best sourdough baker around which happened to be ninety years old with baking experience and wisdom beyond my years - Mrs. Effie. After several visits and phone calls witnessing her expertise and guidance, I began baking my own sourdough bread. Boy, was it a tedious task! I have never been so humbled by failure ... over... and over ... again. Something that seemed so simple and routine helped me become a better problem solver and continually improve my learning. I have definitely increased my knowledge of sourdough baking through reflection and practice. One of my first customers to purchase my bread was Mr. Gardener. He gave me motivation! Just like historical figures fail and persist, I was also able to experience success and failure by increasing my skill and knowledge mastery. I developed a thriving small business within my community. Reflecting on those challenges has helped me gain confidence to tackle real-world problems.

Year four of high school came in the blink of an eye. I was a senior leader on the BCHS Trojanette Volleyball team. I had countless opportunities to provide direction and encouragement to my teammates both on and off the court. Being part of a team reminded me of the importance of unity and sharing common goals. Obviously, we were not able to win every

game, but I was able to be an encourager by focusing on the strengths of my teammates instead of being critical of their mistakes. There were times when we had injured players and the team had to adapt, learning new positions and roles. Each player on the team had a valuable part to play. Being on the BCHS Volleyball team has taught me that teamwork involves a collective effort filled with trust and respect.

As I reflect on my time at Barren County High school, I am filled with gratitude. I am thankful for meaningful experiences which have led to growth and maturity in myself. I have been given so many opportunities to learn and practice responsibility through sports, academics, and social interaction with my classmates and teachers. I am well equipped to enter the next chapter of my life as I continue to take initiative, further my knowledge and skills, and practice teamwork. Wherever life takes me, I will continue to shine my light for Jesus.