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St. Joseph Hill Academy  
Writers' Workshop - Mr. O'Keefe  
11/6/2024

### Family Always comes first

This year was a big year for my family. My younger brother turned double digits -10! He deserves everything he got and more. I can always count on him to put a smile on my face when I am feeling down. I am always careful to do the right thing because I know he looks up to me. I would never want to set a poor example. He is always a great comfort to me. When I wanted to quit soccer and focus on basketball, he told me that forging my own path was important and no matter what I decided, he'd support me every step of the way. Whenever I look up in the stands, he's the first face I see. For his love and support, I am incredibly thankful.

I am incredibly grateful for the love and support of my mom. She is a busy Pediatrician. She takes time away from my brothers and me to care for other people's kids. She helps us with our homework and studies every day with all three of us. She cooks and cleans. She spends her nights in the car driving us from practice to practice. She sits on the sidelines and watches every minute of every practice. She is our biggest fan. She cheers us on from the sidelines whether we are having a good game or not. She is our shoulder to cry on. Her hugs and kisses make everything better. She goes to bed after us every night and is up before us every morning. For all she does, I am grateful.

I am also grateful for my dad. He is an Army veteran and Bronze Star winner. He saved so many lives when he was in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. He served his country for many years and left for deployment when I was 4 weeks old. He is an Orthopedic Surgeon who helps athletes and injured people get back to doing the things they love. He is a great cook and my best fantasy league friend. He always has great advice for trades and who I should bench. For his great fantasy advice and for his service to our country, I am thankful.

My grandmother is an angel. I adore her. I can always count on her to make me laugh with her silly dances and her love for Donald Trump. She helps everyone in whatever way she can and is really the glue that holds our entire family together. She loves God and her country. She prays for all seven of her grandsons every morning when she wakes up. For her love and her prayers, I am thankful.

My aunt and uncle are my rocks. They are who I can always count on to motivate me. They see the world so positively and always give me the best advice. They never put me down and always help me to believe in myself. For their advice and support, I am thankful.

One thing that has my heart especially thankful this year is my older brother. He is the first of the seven grandchildren to start high school. It's been an amazing time for my family to watch it happen. My brother didn't just get into any high school, he got into Regis High School. It is one of the most difficult schools in the country to get into and it is one of the most academically rigorous. He is two months in and he is doing so well. He is even getting bonus questions right on quizzes and tests. His curriculum is college-level and he is doing amazing. He has a quiz every day and gets 2-3 hours of homework every night. He wakes up at 5:40 am and commutes an hour and twenty minutes into New York City. It just amazes me how he comes home with a grade every day and guess what - it is always amazing. Before he started at Regis, we would pray every day for God to keep my brother safe and to help him do well in school. God answered our prayers and for that, I am thankful.

I am nothing special. I do not come with a lot of bells and whistles, but I am grateful for the gifts God has given me. He gave me a family who loves me unconditionally, a heart that helps me love them back, a brain that helps me to do well in school, a conscience that helps me to know the difference between right and wrong, a body that helps me to play the sports I love, a roof over my head, and food on my table. How could I not be thankful?