

2015 High School Essay Contest Winner: Discovering the Heart by Ashtyn Chamberland

Welcome to this celebration of the winners of the 2015 Garaventa Center High School essay contest. The top three essays will be read by UP student actor, Amy Billroth-McClurg.

Discovering the Heart, by Ashtyn Chamberland, from Regis High School, Stayton, Oregon.

I am a surgeon. Well, technically speaking, I have a medical degree, but I'm currently going through my seven year residency at Providence Hospital in Austin, Texas.

That means I am an intern, the bottom of the bowel barrel. My job consist of completing all of the endless paperwork. Cleaning up messes of every imagination, explaining the diagnosis to the family and occasionally getting to assist in an actual surgery. Today I've the privilege to be assigned to the case of six year old Sydney Louley.

Little Sydney was brought into the hospital after she had a seizure in the middle of her show and tell presentation. The reason for the seizure was that she had disorder called congenital heart defect. It is a birth defect, and quite rare. In Sidney's case, the left ventricle in her heart is weak and declining quickly.

We discovered this about three months ago and she has been on the waiting list for a viable heart transplant. The amazing news is that a heart is being delivered to this hospital this morning and surgery is scheduled for three o'clock this afternoon. I am currently on a trek through the maze of corridors they call a hospital to receive and sign for the heart from Transmeds donor facility.

As I am weaving through the ever present crowd by the cafeteria, my pager goes off in my pocket. I glance down to see that I'm being called to Sydney's room for the hourly prep check-up. I force my legs into a slight jog until I reached the front door where the delivery man is patiently waiting with a small red cooler in his hands.

My breath catches in my mouth as I fantasize about what is in there, and I do not realize that the man is talking to me. "Sorry, what did you say?" I asked. He chuckled and said, "Close your mouth doctor. You look like you just got the best present in the world on Christmas. Could I please have you sign for this? You can sign right here."

"Doctor Brooks, Taylor Brooks," I said as I signed the papers. "Well, Dr. Brooks, you have a nice day and don't let that out of your sight," he teased. But I had already grabbed the cooler and was walking as fast as I could with a fresh, fragile heart in my hands.

As I turned into Sydney's room, I came face to face with a tall blonde man with striking blue eyes that closely resembled his daughter's. "I am going downstairs to get some food with my wife, since you are doing your tests now. Just call if you need me," he said, and turned to blow a kiss to his daughter.

My eyes traveled to a beautiful angel, with her father's eyes and long, curly blonde hair, who happily shrieked "Dr. Taylor is back." I smiled walked over to the little girl and asked, "How are you feeling sweetie?" She gave me a wide tooth grin and said, "I'm ready to get a new heart today."

I replied, "Well I picked it up." But I was cut off by the sound of extreme retching in the next room. I look outside and see that no one is coming to assist the poor man. So I say, "I will be right back sweetie, just hang tight."

I quickly scan his lab sheet from outside the door and notice that he's just finished with a session of chemotherapy which has a common side effect of puking. "Mr. O'Connor, here is a bag..." Sadly I never got to finish that as I felt the contents of his stomach being emptied onto my midsection. Other interns chose that moment to step in and I explained to them what happened and then went to change.

Next, I checked on Sydney and saw that she was asleep. Good, she would need all of her energy for the surgery in an hour and a half. Shoot, I forgot to grab the heart from the locker room. I raced back to the locker room and discover it is not there.

I swear I brought it with me. Okay, if it's not here, it has to be Sydney's room. I raced over only to find that she has been taken in for surgery prep and the heart is nowhere to be found. Now I am on the edge of a full blown freak out as I trace my steps all the way back to the front door with the delivery man.

I ask every receptionist if they have seen a red cooler, and they all look at me funny and say no. I glance up at the time, and see that there is now an hour left until the surgery. I yank my friends Sariah and Ryan into a handicap bathroom and tell them what happened.

They are both speechless for about five seconds before we all set out at a fully fledged heart hunt. I search every known nook and cranny where it might be. Then we meet on the front steps with a failure. I hang my head and say I have to go tell the chief that I lost a little girl's heart.

I have to tell the family. Sariah looks up to me and speaks an unexpected word, "Pray."

Now, I am a doctor. I am taught to pick science over religion every time I am taught to believe the hard cold facts. However right now I must pray that God actually exists and will help me find that heart to help this little girl.

My pager goes off and I see it's Sydney's room, my eyes tear up when I realize the information I have to share with the family. When I enter the room, I am rendered speechless. There, lying down in the hospital bed with her arm around a red cooler, and looking very bashful, is Sydney.

Before I can say anything, her surgery prep nurse speaks up and says, "I found her talking to this and hugging it earlier before it I prepped her. She must have swiped it when you were dealing with the throw up situation."

I walk up to Sydney and she shyly says, "I was asking Jesus if it's okay if this is my heart. He said yes and so I was trying to tell it that I will love it forever if it will work for me."

I smile with tears running down my face and say well we can't contradict Jesus now can we? She grins and shakes her curly headed hair. Some people believe in karma that fate will come back one day and bite you in the ass just for the fun of it.

Ever since that day, I believe that God has a sense of humor, even though he decides to show it at the most interesting of times. That girl was meant to have her heart. And in the process, she helped me find a little bit of mine.