



*In Their Own  
Words*

*Hope Hall  
Class of 2023*





## Noah Fallis

Welcome, Parents, Friends, and Faculty, My name Is Noah Fallis and I have been attending Hope Hall for the past three years. Now, I'm graduating high school. The rapper NF once said "*Be careful who you make memories with. Those things can last a lifetime.*" I've made some great memories here at Hope Hall.

Before I started at Hope Hall, I attended a different high school. It was awful and the building was like a prison. When I was at the school, it felt like there was no escape! I was living In a nightmare that constantly repeated over and over again. Also, I had no support. I felt like I wasn't heard and no one understood me. They didn't want me around. Walking into, and around school made me feel alone and like an outcast. Not only that, students were cussing out their teachers left and right without any repercussions. It wasn't right! During class, the teachers would not help me when I asked. They would tell me to figure it out on my own. I was really stressed about my future and if I could make it in life. It caused me to have severe anxiety while trying to battle everything that was going on inside my head. I felt like everything around me was just going downhill. Nothing was going right. Every day, I was getting bullied, harassed and constantly getting death threats from people in my class. Nobody liked me! I always had to push through these struggles and hardships. No matter how hard I got hit, physically or emotionally, I always got back up, and I never gave up.

When I came to Hope Hall I was a very angry, hurt person. Then the first week of school was mind blowing! All of the teachers were super nice which really shocked me; I did not see that coming. Furthermore, I love the teachers here. They have truly made an impact on my life and the decisions that I now make. Also, I was not expecting the students to be so nice; they actually said, "Hi" to me while walking in the halls. I thought I was going to go through the same stuff I did at my last school. I still had my struggles with others, but I learned how to adapt and overcome them. This school has really taught me to be respectful, mindful and considerate of others. I have also been taught that no matter who you are, or where you come from, everyone has a chance to make it in life.

One of the most memorable moments I can recall is when I was in 11th grade. I was sitting in science class and I tried closing the curtain, but it fell down suddenly, and the look on my face was so funny that we all started laughing hysterically. I also fondly remember having some serious conversations with my teachers and classmates. Those talks helped me to find peace of mind when I needed it.

One piece of advice I would give to future students is that being popular is overrated. Don't give into the hype and try to be something you're not because fitting in is not everything. Also, stand up for yourself and don't let anyone walk all over you. You're special and you matter. Push through your challenges, hardships, struggles, and never give up because in the end you will find the light.

I have many people to thank for helping me to get to where I am today. I first want to thank Sister Diana for making this school and having such incredible teachers to teach us the ways of life. I want to say thank you to my family for giving me the space to learn and grow and gain independence. I also want to say a thank you to my 2 friends who have always been there for me no matter what. I have so much appreciation for them because they have built me up in so many ways. This has helped me gain more confidence. I couldn't ask for better friends then that, and I

love you both. I also want to thank my friend Tilahun Gushish. Although he isn't here anymore, he lives on in our hearts and he will always be remembered for the person that he was. Tilahun helped me through many battles and I'll always be forever grateful for that. The last thing he said to me before he passed was "I love you brother no matter how hard it gets. Trust in God, keep it going, and I promise you will make It through. I will see you soon." Lastly, I want to say thank you to two of my teachers for always being there for me whenever I needed to talk and vent to get things out that were happening in my life. Thank you so much, you both really made me feel like I mattered. You both never doubted me, and always believed in me and I can't say how much you both mean to me. I'm going to miss you both a lot and I just want to say I love you guys.

The rapper Logic once said "Just because you got money doesn't mean you're gonna be happy, and just 'cuz you can buy everything in the world doesn't mean you're gonna find your purpose." It's been a long year but I'm super grateful for everyone around me who has helped me in any way to get to where I am now. Through all the blood, sweat and tears it was all worth it.

Thank you, I'm forever grateful.

## **Andrew Rumble**

Hello, my name is Andrew Rumble and I am proud to graduate from Hope Hall School. I have been at Hope Hall School for eight years now.

Before I came to Hope Hall, school was hard for me. It was tough to understand my work in all of my classes. There was a lot of homework that took a long time for me to do. I had lots of reading and writing in class, and lots of large books to take home for homework. They made me do a lot of cursive and difficult math, but I didn't get enough help. I ended up failing 4th grade and had to retake it again because of the level of difficulty in my classes. When I first heard I was going to a new school called Hope Hall I was sad and confused that I was leaving my old school. But over time I got used to it, and knew this school was the right fit for me.

I have had some memorable moments at Hope Hall. I remember the first day I joined this school. I can still recall where I sat in the community room when Sister introduced me to everyone. I was so nervous, but she made me feel respected. Another fond memory is from my time in woodworking class. I made a chair and a table in the woodshop as well as other wood projects throughout the years that I can look back on. I loved playing for the seniors in the staff vs. student volleyball and basketball games that we did. I tried my hardest to beat the teachers. I sometimes think about the time this year when the whole entire school threw paper airplanes at the same time, and how cool that was to watch. I will always remember seeing the demolition of the school while I was in the wood shop. It brought back so many memories from times that I walked through that door onto the playground. Lastly, I remember all of the Walk for Hope fundraisers that I went to. The activities and just hanging out with classmates was always a lot of fun.

I have learned many things at Hope Hall that I will be taking out into the world with me. One thing is that if I went to public school, I wouldn't have experienced the community that we have here. I learned a lot from the people in my class who told me I need to do the things I am afraid to do, like driving and getting a job. They helped me to see that it's not so bad. Furthermore, if I never step out of my comfort zone, I will never grow. Finally, I learned that I should be respectful to others, even people I don't like or get along with.

Some advice I would give to future students can be explained by a quote from Albert Einstein. He once said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

I want to say thank you to all the teachers for helping me through the years at Hope Hall School. Thanks to the students for being polite and supporting me and each other in our classes. Thanks to Sister Diana for making this school possible for young kids and teens. Lastly, I want to thank my parents for putting me in Hope Hall School and accepting that I needed a different type of education.

I am looking forward to a bright future ahead of me but I will never forget the experiences I had at Hope Hall School.

Thank you.

## **Xavier Thompson-Drumgoole**

Hello, my name is Xavier Thompson-Drumgoole and I have attended Hope Hall for almost seven years.

School before Hope Hall was fun, but also challenging. I had lots of friends and the teachers liked me, but I struggled with learning what was being taught and the class work. My First impressions of Hope Hall were great, but it felt weird stepping into a new school. However, I managed to get used to it eventually. The teachers, staff, and Students were all nice and friendly, not just to me, but to others around me. Overall I felt great about being at Hope Hall. In the past seven years I've been at Hope Hall I've had some memorable moments, but they haven't all been perfect. In fact, five of my friends that I knew have all left me in some way. One friend even passed away because of cancer. I don't know if he would have even considered me a friend because we talked so little, but he made a massive impact on me and my life. Since then I've been all over the place. Watching my old friends leave school, and the death of one of my good friends who always had a positive attitude all the time, made me feel down at times. Now, I have watched some of my old friends grow all in different places. Some have done good, and some not so good.

What I learned from all this and what I will take out into the world is it's important to be resilient. When you go through tough times it's going to be difficult, but you have to trust that you're on the right path. It's important not to be a follower. Even though we have role models that we look up to, we should try to be even better than that. Some advice for my friends and future students is to always be yourself, never change for anyone, don't give up, even when things are hard. Be a leader and be resilient because it will all be worth it in the end. You can show others the right thing to do through your own actions. I want to give a big thank you to my mom and dad for always giving me the push I needed even before high school. I also want to thank all of my grandparents for supporting me in everything, even coming to my after-school games, and picking me up or dropping me off. You were always there to support me through wins and losses.

I also want to thank my teachers for not just teaching me, but also being there for me. Always asking me if I was okay or needed someone to talk to when personal or school situations happened. Finally Hope Hall has taught me a lot since my time here. Some things on purpose and others through accident. I have learned how to adapt to different environments during my time here.

Thank You.

## **Anthony Hawkes**

Hello everyone, my name is AJ Hawkes. I have been at Hope Hall since 7th grade. I would like to start with a quote from my favorite NBA player of all time. He was known as The Black Mamba, Kobe Bryant. He once said, "Everything negative - pressure, challenges - is all an opportunity for me to rise". Hope Hall changed the negatives in my life to opportunities for me. In 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade the teachers were not good. They told me that I wouldn't learn to read, never learn to tie my shoes, or learn to write. I wasn't going anywhere in life. No one would help me. The teachers didn't care about what was wrong with me. I was bullied for how I spoke, and even how I looked. When I came to Hope Hall, this all changed. My mom decided that I should visit Hope Hall. In fact, I already knew the school because my two cousins went here as well. I have had some memorable moments at Hope Hall. At first when I came here I saw one of my old friends, which was a big surprise, but a good one. Along the way I met more people and made new friends as well.

One memorable moment I will remember forever is in 9th grade when I got moved up to the varsity team in basketball. I felt like I had accomplished something great. Also, this past year I was an assistant coach for the 7th and 8th grade basketball team. It felt good to help the younger students with things like passing, taking smart shots, and other ways to get better. I hope to use this experience to eventually become an assistant coach in the future. My advice for future students is to be yourself and don't be like anyone else. Work hard in your classes. You should remember to hang out with the people who are not going to get you in trouble. Surround yourself with good, positive people who do the right thing.

I want to first say thank you to Sister Diana for making this school. Also, I want to say thank you to all my teachers at Hope Hall. Lastly, I want to say thank you to my family for helping me through life, the good times and the difficult times. I don't know what I would do without my family. I want to end my speech with some words from one of the greatest basketball players who ever played the game, Kobe Bryant. He had accomplished so much during his time as a pro, and during his final game, he said, "Mamba Out". Now it's my turn to say, "AJ out". Thank you.

Thank you.

## Queen Anne Miller

Velt Kidd once said, “Hurt in private. Heal in silence. Glow in public”. Hi, my name is QueenAnne Miller and I have been at Hope Hall for six years.

Before Hope Hall, school was stressful, difficult, and it was hard to understand some topics the teacher was teaching. At my old school there were negative people who treated me poorly throughout my time there. Over the years people around me were making bad choices, and I was trying to fit in. Then I started making the same choices they were making. One of the most difficult things for me was having confidence in myself. I felt ashamed of myself, like I was too fat to try during certain gym activities because of the way kids treated me. I needed to escape that environment.

My first impressions of Hope Hall were how peaceful everything was. Everyone was polite and respected each other, and cared for one another. This was unlike anything I had experienced at other schools. Throughout my time at Hope Hall I have learned that it is healthy to open-up to others. I have found that I relate to a lot of people because they are in the same boat as me. I learned that I am not alone. Another thing that I have learned is that it’s important to show gratitude towards others. Saying “thank you” and “have a nice day” to people who you don’t usually talk to lets them know that you care, and that they aren’t alone.

One memorable moment that I experienced at Hope Hall was meeting new, positive friends, teachers, and classmates. Being with them brought me great joy every day. At Hope Hall I became more sociable and comfortable in all situations. I made memories that will last forever. Some advice I have for future students is to be your own unique sunflower that stands taller than the others. Put yourself, and your happiness first before you try to make others happy.

I wanna give a special thank you to my teachers and the staff at Hope Hall. Thank you for always being here teaching me no matter what. Also, I want to thank my Father for always being there when I’m at my lowest and for being a dad that I can take care of later on in life. Thank you as well to Ms.Kim & Mrs. Celena for giving me positive advice in life. And to my support group, thank you for being supportive no matter what we were going through. Lastly, I want to send out a special thank you to my mom who isn’t with us right now, but I know she is here in spirit.

At this very moment, I can’t believe that I’m standing up here, and graduating, but I am excited for the future and everything that’s ahead. Thank you to everyone who is listening right now & thank you, Sister Diana, for Hope Hall!

Thank you.



## **Aidan Rizzi**

Hello, my name is Aidan Rizzi and I have attended Hope Hall for 5 years. School before Hope Hall was hard and the work was difficult. I really struggled a lot, got stressed out, and no one was really helping me much. The teachers weren't explaining things well enough so that I could understand them. I had to stay after school because my grades weren't great. That school wasn't meant for me at all.

One day my Mom told me about Hope Hall. After coming to Hope Hall, I felt like it was a lot better for me. The teachers explained things so well that I could understand them and they didn't just give me difficult work without helping me. They gave me work that I could do well, and sometimes they would support me when I needed it. My grades started getting a lot better and my school work was improving. My grades went up into the 80s and I was making Honor Roll. I was so relieved that I was finding success.

I have had some memorable moments here at Hope Hall. One moment is from my first year at Hope Hall, 8th grade. In June I was the student of the month and got the Master of Learning award. It felt different than anything I had ever experienced at my old school. Also, I like all of the events and activities that we did in class and as a whole school.

Some of the things that I learned at Hope Hall that I will take into the world are that I need to advocate for myself and speak up when I am unsure of something. I have learned about the value of the effort that I put into my work, but also that everyone learns differently, and works at their own pace. Hope Hall has taught me about the importance of always acting professionally and having empathy.

Some advice I want to give to future students is to always act professionally and follow expectations. Be respectful, listen, pay attention to your teachers and what they are saying, and show them that you follow directions by knowing what to do. Make sure you do your work so that you don't get far behind so that you don't have to be worried, stressed and overwhelmed about it. If you get stuck, advocate for yourself, ask for help, and speak up. The teachers are trying to get you ready to graduate, and to be successful with what you want to do after school.

Thank you to my family for bringing me to Hope Hall which was the right place for me so that I could feel more comfortable. Also, thank you to my friends for being so respectful to me, and showing and helping me to do things in a correct way. Finally, thank you to Sister Diana and my teachers who taught me so well. If I ever got stuck on an assignment they taught me the skills and strategies so that I could understand it and be successful. I would like to end with a quote by my favorite baseball player, Anthony Rizzo. He says, "I believe that everything you work at and want in life is a great challenge." I connect with this because I have faced challenges in my life, but I always got through them. I will continue to persevere even when I leave Hope Hall.

Thank you.

## Alex Rooksby

Thomas Fuller once said “All things are difficult before they get easy”.

My name is Alex Rooksby. You may already know me, or you may just be seeing me for the first time, but I have been attending Hope Hall for ten years. I am feeling a lot of mixed emotions about standing here in a cap and gown ready to graduate. It feels like just yesterday I was coming here for the first time, seeing everyone, and meeting all the teachers. The time has flown by.

Hope Hall helped me because in my old school my teachers did not believe in me. They told my parents that I would never graduate because of my disabilities and since I learned differently. Being in a classroom at a public school was like being around a bunch of people who were speaking a different language. In fact, to this day sometimes it still happens in restaurants if a bunch of family members are talking a lot at once. At my old school I struggled to understand what was being taught or said. School was not like this when I made the switch to Hope Hall.

Hope Hall made me feel safe and happy to come to school. At Hope Hall I knew that I could graduate, play sports, and be myself without trying to fit in and feel insecure. When coming to Hope Hall, as soon as I walked in I felt that Sister Diana didn't just open the doors to me, it felt like she opened her heart. Some of my favorite things about Hope Hall are that I am able to learn and get the extra help I need and the teachers are willing to take extra time to help me understand what is being taught.

One of my favorite moments during my time at Hope Hall was reconnecting with my childhood friend AJ. We were in the same class in first grade, but we met again in seventh grade. Look at us now! Another important moment from my time here was everyone being accepting and supportive when I changed my name. Also, having teachers and staff who supported me while I was going through hard times at home. All my teachers were here to talk to me whenever I needed it. Additionally, I loved being on the basketball team and playing with my friends, classmates and coaches. Lastly, a really memorable moment for me was taping Sister to the gym wall for a Puerto Rico fundraiser after we had raised a certain amount of money. Sorry, Sister.

Some of the things I have learned at Hope Hall that I will take out into the world is that not everyone you meet is rude and disrespectful. Some people do want you to graduate and be successful. So many of those people were right here at Hope Hall. During my time here I learned that it's ok to be different, not everyone's the same, and it's ok to not grasp things right away. Hope Hall also taught me to never give up no matter how tough the situation seems at the moment because you will get through it.

My advice for future Students at Hope Hall Is that it is okay to be wrong, you don't have to be right at everything. No matter what life throws at you, you can get through it.

I want to thank my mom and dad for finding this school and getting me to where I am today. You helped me realize that the world would not be a better place without me. You also helped me to realize it is ok to have disabilities and you should be proud of them because they make you unique. I also want to thank Sister Diana for making a school where kids can come and know they can graduate and be themselves without having to feel like they're different or weird. I also want to thank my teachers for helping me learn, and for doing anything they could for me to grasp the subject. They were always there to help.

I want to end with a quote from Winston Churchill, who once said “Success is not final, Failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts”. All I have to say is this is not goodbye, It’s see you later.

Thank you.

## **Nathan Yohon**

John Lennon once said, "I get by with a little help from my friends". This is how I feel being at Hope Hall. Hi, my name is Nathan Yohon, and I have been attending Hope Hall for the past eight years.

In Kindergarten and 1st grade, school was very difficult. I was in a special ed. class with about a dozen others. One kid had tantrums and I had trouble learning in that environment. At the time, I lived down the street from Hope Hall. We eventually moved, but my parents finally took a tour of the school and decided it was the right place for me. I am thankful that they did that because once I started at Hope Hall, I was finally learning and making friends at school.

I have made many fond memories here at Hope Hall. I will always remember saying "Hi" to Sister Diana every day. She made me feel like I mattered. Furthermore, I remember planning Mrs. Mott's baby shower and how fun it was to surprise her. I also remember doing arts, crafts, and cooking with Mrs. Mott. Another great memory I have is coming to summer camp and going on field trips every Friday. Lastly, I will always remember doing the scoreboard during the after-school basketball games. I remember when Ms. Holman sent off the fire alarm.

Some advice I would give to the younger students at Hope Hall is pay attention in community and listen to Sister Diana because what she says can have a major difference in your life. I would like to thank Sister Diana Dolce, my mom and dad, and all of my teachers in the past and present. I would also like to thank our dear friend Tilahun, who is gone but never forgotten.

I am so excited to finally be graduating. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it's done." Now, I can officially say that I am done with High School.

Thank you.

## **Albina Aliyeva**

Hello, my name is Albina Aliyeva. I have been attending Hope Hall since 7th grade. I was born in Russia which meant I struggled a lot with learning English. School before Hope Hall wasn't good. At my old school I used to make bad choices. I would make poor decisions that I have come to regret to this day. I wouldn't ever want to do my work, and I would skip classes when I was there. Moreover, I used to get cat called in school which made me feel uncomfortable when I was there.

These difficult times led me to Hope hall. I heard about Hope Hall from family members who attended in the past. Furthermore, Hope Hall has made me become a better individual. However, I've struggled and persevered a lot to become the woman I am now. The memories I've created at Hope Hall with friends and teachers are unforgettable. Our 8th grade year was filled with moments I will never forget. During our senior year going down to the gymnasium during academic development and spending time with different classes was a blessing. I've made many friends, and lost many, but the people who are still around are my biggest supporters. I've learned that there are lots of people here who struggle within their own situations, but not a single soul has given up. One past graduate who I looked up has since passed away. His name was T. He was a very strong, independent man. He went through a lot, but always had a smile on his face. That showed me that life's too short to let little things always get to me.

I would like to thank Sister Diana, Mrs. Droegmoeller, Ms. McLean for letting me attend this school. I would also like to thank all my teachers for supporting me and helping me out with everything. My advice for future students is to never give up. You have such a bright future ahead of you. Life isn't always going to be easy. There will be a lot that you struggle with, but you're going to have to try and find solutions that make you happy and help you to overcome those problems.

Lastly, I want to share a quote that I love. Alison Malee once said, "We must accept the end of something in order to begin to build something new."

Thank you.

## **Billy Bosley**

Hi, my name is Billy. I have been at Hope Hall for 5 years. School before Hope Hall was ok. I didn't pay attention to any of my classes and I failed most of the classes I took. I had always put my head down and slept during class, but not at Hope Hall. The reason I put my head down is because none of my teachers cared enough to say anything about it and just let me do it. At Hope Hall all the teachers cared and they kept me on the right path. They truly care for students and try to help them to the best of their ability.

During my time here, I have learned how to communicate, read, and write way better than I originally could. I could never really read that well until I was pushed to read by my teachers. I have also learned how to write emails and cover letters for different career paths. One memorable moment from Hope Hall was meeting Troy. I met Troy in 8th grade but we never really started talking until 9th, that's when we started getting close. We went through some tough times, but every time we made it back and are now graduating together.

I would like to say thank you to Ms. Dunning and Mrs. Van Ark for being there if I ever needed help with anything. Thank you for always looking for the best way to help me and always trying to be supportive.

Lastly, some advice I have for others is if you believe in something, don't let anyone try to stop you from believing in it. If you have a certain feeling about something don't let the wrong people talk you out of it. Follow that feeling, and let it take you to where you are meant to be. If you follow this advice, you will be able to find happiness.

Thank you.

## **Kolby Harris**

Hello, my name is Kolby Harris and I have been going to Hope hall for 6 years now and am finally graduating from here.

Before coming to Hope Hall I had a lot of bad experiences while being in the public school system. I was switched to 2-3 different schools during my 3rd-5th grade years. This was difficult because I had to try to get used to a different building, different teachers, and different peers. Additionally, it was hard learning the different material that was being taught, especially in math and ELA. Students were not being too kind and were even being disrespectful towards teachers. Sometimes I was way behind on schoolwork because I didn't understand how the material was taught.

My first impressions of Hope Hall when I came were very positive. I was happy because people were so nice to me on my first day and showed me around. Students and teachers asked me questions about my past experiences with public school, and I felt like this was the right place to be. I felt comfortable at Hope Hall.

Some memorable moments that I've had at Hope Hall were making lots of good friends, having a lot of fun at the Walk for Hope, and playing games with other students. Furthermore, I enjoyed participating in after school sports with my friends on the basketball team during my senior year.

Some things that I've learned from Hope Hall that I will take into the world is always advocate for yourself to let people know about your needs. Also, always be kind to others no matter what differences they may have. You shouldn't treat people poorly just because they're different. It's important to always stand up for yourself.

Some advice for future students that come here is to never give up, and always try your hardest no matter what the situation is. Furthermore, you must use perseverance to get through tough situations. I want to thank my family for helping me get the education I needed. I also want to thank Sister Diana for always inspiring us to be our best selves and to never lose hope. Lastly, I would like to end with a quote by Kyojuro Rengoku. He says, "Go ahead and live with your head held high. No matter how devastated you may be by your own weakness or uselessness. Set your heart ablaze. Grit your teeth and look straight ahead."

Thank you.

## **Symone Williams**

Nipsey Hussle once said, “Without a game plan, and without a strong sense of faith in what you're doing, it's going to be really hard to accomplish anything”.

Hello, my name is Symone Williams and I have attended Hope Hall for 4 years now. School before Hope Hall wasn't that good. I would get into trouble and also give the teachers a hard time. My grades weren't great because I didn't understand the work that I was given. When I shadowed at Hope Hall, it was different to me because there weren't as many kids in one class. The teachers and students were kind to me and also welcomed me. After the shadow I told my mom that Hope Hall would be a good fit for me.

The best moments I had at Hope Hall were participating in the Walk for Hope and playing on the basketball team. One thing that I learned at Hope Hall is that it's okay to be different from other people. It's good to be proud of the things that make you unique. Another thing I learned at Hope Hall is to show empathy. Treat others how you want to be treated.

Some advice I have for future students is to be yourself and never let anyone change who you are. I would like to thank the man above for putting me in this world and letting my light shine. I would also like to thank my wonderful family, especially my mom because she fought really hard for my education. I would also like to thank my teachers for never giving up on me even if I didn't understand the work. I would also like to thank Mrs. G because she has helped me from the first time I stepped foot into Hope Hall, all the way up until my last class. I would also like to thank my friend Albina because when I first got her she showed me around the school and made me feel welcomed and showed me what a friendship is supposed to look like. Lastly, I would like to thank Mrs. Droegmoeller, Sister Diana, And Ms. McLean because without them I wouldn't be here today.

Lastly, I would like to end with a quote. Minor Myers Junior once said “Go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good”.

Thank you.



## Matthew Dengler

Hello, my name is Matthew Dengler and I have attended Hope Hall for 6 years. I first came to Hope Hall in 7th grade. For those of you who don't know, I was born with schizencephaly, which means I am living without parts of my brain. The doctors once told my parents that I wouldn't be able to walk or talk, but here I am standing on my own two feet and speaking to everyone.

Before Hope Hall, school for me was rough. I don't want to get into it too much, but I'll sum it up. At my old school, some teachers didn't care even when they said that they did. They picked favorites, and it felt like my classes weren't organized or planned out well. I needed a change. My mom found out about Hope Hall through Sister Diana, who she met at Nazareth Academy many years ago.

During my time at Hope Hall I have had a lot of memorable moments. As an athlete, my favorite moments here were being involved in the sports programs. I joined the basketball team during my first year, and at first I was lost. However, Mr. Zehr was always the best coach, and gave me ways to improve. Not only was he a great coach, but he was also the best P.E. teacher I ever had. He has taught me many things through the athletic program. Moreover, He has taught me how to trust the process because nothing is ever perfect in the blink of an eye. It takes hard work. He has taught me that there is always room for improvement and he put me in a position to succeed, even though I wasn't the best player on the court. Additionally, I've also learned things by myself like how to use other people's doubt as motivation. It's a powerful feeling to prove somebody wrong.

If you don't know much about me, it's fair to say that I am very heavily invested in pro wrestling. People love to focus on the fact that it's fake, but so are most of the T.V. shows that people watch for entertainment. There are many things I've learned from watching pro wrestling, and I want to recognize a few wrestlers who have helped me through life. For instance, Kevin Owens, who taught me to "just keep fighting". Additionally, Dolph Ziggler, who taught me to fight with everything that you have left, and get up when you still have wounds. Another performer who goes by MJF, uses the catchphrase "I'm better than you and you know it". His character may be a little selfish and arrogant, and sometimes he brags too much. However, through his performances he taught me to be confident and just remember that believing in yourself will take you far. Lastly, I have to mention Johnny Gargano, who taught me that if you bet on yourself, you will always win.

There are several people I want to thank for these wonderful years at Hope Hall. I would like to thank all the teachers and staff here at Hope Hall for treating me with respect unlike other schools that I had been to. Also, thank you for believing in me. Lastly, thank you mom and dad for helping me defy the odds of my disability. I have appreciated your love and support over the years.

If there is any advice I could give to future students, I would say to find your inspiration in something that you are passionate about. As spoken by Kenny Omega, "goodbye and goodnight".

Thank you.

## Savannah Hickey

Hello, my name is Savannah and I've attended Hope Hall for four years. Today is a day to look back on the past, both good and bad, to see how far we've come.

Before arriving at Hope Hall, my outlook on life had been murky and dim. Stress and anxiety a prevalent companion, I struggled my way through Middle school with dragging footsteps. For over a year, I was under the belief that I would never get past this hill. A quote from the late author Dazai Osamu speaks of these issues, *"All I feel are the assaults of apprehension and terror at the thought that I am the only one who is entirely unlike the rest. It is almost impossible for me to converse with other people. What should I talk about, how should I say it? - I don't know."*

I was in art class when my mother messaged me, I remember it achingly clear. She told me she found a school, one that she believed would be a better fit and aid in my happiness and education. I trusted her, as I always have, and went in with a hesitantly hopeful mind.

Hope Hall has helped make me who I am. Teachers and peers alike taught valuable lessons whether purposefully or not.

The teachers here have a different sort of dedication and outlook on how to teach students. Their guidance and kindness is what left the largest impression on me. With their help, my confidence and perspective grew and changed; I came to be a better person through it.

I'd like to give a word of advice for future students who may hear this speech. Patience is a trait that is difficult to come by but is ever important in your daily life. Understanding others around you and remaining level headed in situations that you may struggle to, will aid in developing you as a person. Grudges can only get you so far. Forgiveness may be hard to come by, but acceptance and relieving yourself of grievances is a feasible step to take. Patience is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

I wanted to say thank you to my family, who've always had faith in me and shaped me into who I am. My mother and father especially, who's support and care I will always cherish. To my teachers, who took the meager foundations of my confidence and helped me grow it to something steady. And to my friends. Despite how they may be in separate states, they are truly the ones who brought me from a timid 8th grader to someone I'm proud of. Their kindness and friendship taught me how to be happy again.

I'd like to end with one last quote by Kafka Asagiri. *"It's not whether I can win, it's about whether I'm willing to fight. Prevailing against myself, that's what I've always done."* Though it may be time to depart from this school, the lessons I've learned will remain with me for years to come. My high school years were happy ones, something I hadn't thought possible. Thank you everyone.

Thank you.

## **Troy Starkweather**

Hello my name is Troy Starkweather. I've been attending Hope Hall since eighth grade. Prior to Hope Hall I attended a different private institute. When I was there I found it very hard to stay motivated because of the amount of freedom that was given to me and none of my teachers pushed me to learn. It was almost like I had nothing to work towards.

However here at Hope Hall our teachers truly care about our education and push us to become the very best version of ourselves that we possibly can. One of my favorite memories I've made at Hope hall was sitting with my cousin Billy and Ms. Dunning during academic development and having conversations about future plans and current events.

One memorable moment I had at Hope Hall was playing on the basketball team. Mr Zehr is the best coach and Physical Education teacher I've ever had and easily one of the genuinely funniest people I've ever met.

There are a few people I would like to thank for helping me along my educational journey. First I want to thank Ms. Dunning. Ms. Dunning and I had a rough start through my junior year because she was a new teacher. However after I realized how much she truly cared for my education and pushed me to achieve academically I regretted giving her such a hard time. Ms. Dunning has helped me in many ways other than my education. She has gotten me through tough decisions I've had to make and gave me the guidance I've needed to better my future. With that being said, thank you Ms., Dunning for pushing me to be the best version of myself I could possibly be.

Next I would like to thank my parents. My mother and father are the strongest people I know. They've worked countless back breaking hours to ensure I had a safe and fun childhood yet pushed me enough to ensure I achieve my goals and do something positive with my life. I am still unsure of how I could ever thank them enough for being the best parents I could've ever asked for. I would also like to thank my sister Nina, thank you for your guidance and wisdom. I am very appreciative for the close brother and sister bond and relationship we've always had. I feel like I can come to you for anything and you could always do the same. Lastly I would like to thank my cousin Billy. Billy and I have become closer and closer throughout the years and have become brothers who bond by more than blood. We together have created an insane amount of enjoyable memories and hopefully have way more to come.

Some advice I would like to leave for future students is to be yourself, be brave and don't care about what others think, make memories. Have fun and be safe because life is short.

Thank you.

## **Julia Pittman**

Hi my name is Julia Pittman, I am a senior at Hope Hall High-School and I would like to share my experiences and thoughts with you. Walking into Hope Hall versus walking into a different school is extremely different. Hope hall is welcoming and has a caring community, unlike others. I came to hope hall because my old school was not a great fit for me. I was often stressed and even scared to go to school. School should be a safe and peaceful space, and that is what Hope Hall is for me.

I've made some great memories here at Hope Hall, including going to the Genesee Country Museum, spirit week, senior breakfast, gym class, and going for walks in the summertime. Hope Hall is an amazing school, I wish that I came here earlier!

Hope hall has taught me how to be a great team worker, even if there are kids that I don't get along with, I have learned to work with them kindly and professionally. Also, I have learned that community means so much. This school has the best community I have ever been a part of. Plus, I've learned that life has obstacles and that is okay, getting past them makes up who you are.

Some advice I would like to give the underclassman is to stay out of drama, focus on yourself and to try your best academically. Don't let meaningless things distract you, it's really not that important in the end. Lastly, I'd like to thank my family for supporting me through everything, and I would like to thank the teachers and staff for educating and supporting me.

Thank you.

