

## **Inspirational Teacher Dennis McDavid**

### **A Story by Ashley Maloff**

I never realized how much of a difference my high school English teacher would have on my life until May of 2007 when I was first diagnosed with epilepsy. This was the most grueling time in my life and it seemed as if everything hit me all at once – even the medication I was placed on caused me to experience side effects, often leaving me fatigued and unable to concentrate. Mr. McDavid would sit with me while I was having seizures, and he would walk me out to my parent’s car when I was feeling ill.

When I wanted to give up, Mr. McDavid had this special way of helping me cope with everything I was forced to endure. He would stay after school to help me complete assignments that I missed due to absences from doctor appointments and seizures, he would tell me jokes on bad days, but most importantly, he would treat me like everyone else. When I became sick, Mr. McDavid still saw me as the same student he met at the beginning of the year and for that I am forever grateful.

The consistency he provided me throughout the end of my junior year went above and beyond what any other person gave me, and I knew that I could always turn to him for the right thing to say, or simply to listen when everything seemed to be going wrong. Mr. McDavid helped me to see that I would be able to get past my seizures and find the right medication. He never once gave up on me and helped me to tackle each academic and personal obstacle I faced head on. He is a person who truly understands that some days are just more difficult than others. Mr. McDavid believed in me on days when I stopped believing in myself, and reaffirmed my beliefs that I would achieve success.

I know what it feels like to feel sick daily at school and still make it through the day, to feel different from my peers at a time when I wanted so badly to be accepted, and at the end of the day, to have a teacher smile and ask me how my day went. It is because of Mr. McDavid, and his ability to see me, as a person and a student, and not just a disability and a label that makes me feel so completely grateful for him.

Mr. McDavid showed me that the world was at my fingertips, and that I could reach any goal I set for myself. It is because of his wisdom and support that I was able to reach my professional goal of becoming an educator. I currently work as an Ability Access Specialist at the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at Michigan State University. Mr. McDavid taught me that we are all facing individual battles which help shape us as people. Those battles make us stronger, more empathetic and more compassionate.