

Community Comment – February 27th, 2017

By Jon Sapper

Resiliency

We all like to hear stories of individuals who have faced adversity, have overcome the odds and are doing well. Those are feel good stories and remind us of the benefit of resiliency. Everybody has challenges, but some among us have faced some pretty tough experiences that have helped define who they are.

For example, I applaud the story of a young high school girl who had to go to work to help her single parent mother pay the bills after her mother unexpectedly lost most of her eyesight that forced her to quit two of her three jobs. The young girl said, "This hardship has shown me I can overcome anything". Or, another teenager whose mother was diagnosed with a debilitating disease that required her daughter to manage the medications, feed and clean her and keep the house up, all while trying to do well in school. Then, after her mother passed away was able to look back and say, "I'm a better person for what I have had to deal with."

Or, another young person looking back saying, "At the age of five I had my first experience with homelessness. Eventually, my mom was able to move us into a rundown trailer. But, I didn't know how to find any stability in this transient life. I eventually found the answer....education. I first went to school when I was in second grade and I couldn't read or write and didn't have any social skills. In this world of rundown trailer parks and foodbanks, I began to foster a ravenous hunger for knowledge and an unstoppable desire to learn." Or another story, "My father got into drugs and after living with him for four years I moved in with my mom. All I had was a backpack and one small box of clothes. I was depressed. I lived in the small living room with no privacy. I have overcome it and am now more confident than ever. I couldn't be happier." A fifth story, "I have spent too many days in the hospital battling my mental illness. I even quit school for a while. It affected me greatly, but, after years of support from my family, therapists and doctors, I am now doing great and have a bright future."

There is a common thread to those stories of adversity and resiliency. Every one of those individuals is optimistic about their future and said family was the most important part of their life. They said their parent or parents were their best friends. Many said faith was important that helped them deal with the

challenges. It hasn't been easy for them. One was asked what they do for fun. They couldn't answer the question.

Having a significant adult or parent in the life of a child makes all the difference in the world. As a community, let's do our part to help, because there is another common thread to those stories. Each one of those individuals is currently a very accomplished student in a local school.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.