

At the age of five, I met a person who I knew would leave a huge impact on my life. However, I never realized how enormous of an impact until later on in life when she departed. My grandmother, Filiberta Valenzuela, passed away on March 26, 2008. I always thought she would be here forever with me, and I was not mistaken. Even though now she is no longer with us physically, I know in spirit she always is. Knowing she is there with me where ever I am, helps me get through this challenging life. I admired my grandmother, or as I used to call her, Fili, the most because she was a strong, independent, and loving person. Fili was in my life for only ten years, but those ten years were enough to leave a lifetime impact.

I always enjoyed hearing her life stories. She would tell me about how my grandfather left Mexico and came to the United States for a better life. She however, stayed in Mexico with her three children, and raised them by herself. Since my grandfather was in the USA the majority of the year, he sent part of his check to her and their children. Because of this situation, I called her independent. She raised three children, took care of the household, and managed the income my grandfather sent to her every month. She had many things on her plate, and yet, she never gave up. She was a well organized, respected, and independent woman in the ranch where they lived in Mexico. Everyone knew who she was, and no one had a single complaint about her or her children. Now, when I go to Mexico, and proud to say who is my family, and who was my grandmother.

However, that is not the only reason I admire and appreciate her. She taught me how to be strong in this sometimes cruel and harsh life. She never gave up, no matter the situation; especially at the end when we all found out she had cancer. When the doctors told her she had cancer in her lungs, she did not cry or become sad, but instead looked at it as a challenge from life, and she said, "Well, I'm not going to let it get to me. Doctor I'm ready for whatever comes my way, and I'm going to fight this disease for my family and me. I love my family and do not expect to leave them any time soon." I felt so proud at that moment of her. Even though she was the one with cancer, I took it harder than her. My first reaction was to cry, and she, she smiled and saw it as a little rock on her path. Her strength was immense that day. Just like her last few months of life. In her last few months, we all thought she was fine. But we later found out, by one of her really good friends that she had been having terrible headaches, and she hid them from all of us to not see us suffer by her suffering. It was just like her to think about her family before herself. She would never put herself first, no matter what. It was then and there that I realized how strong her love was for us, and how immensely strong she was.

I will never forget her. Ever since she passed away, I have always gotten wonderful comments about her. Family and friends always mention how strong and beautiful she was as a human being. I have never heard any disrespectful comment towards her. Frankly, that is how I want people to look at me. I would like to have that respect she received from everyone where ever she went. I admire my grandmother, Filiberta, the most for her strong, independent, and loving capability towards life. I am

proud to of had her as a grandmother, and hopefully, one day, friends and family could look at me with the respect and admiration they once gave her. I know I will have to earn it like her, but in the end, I know it will all be worth while.

My Mentor, My Aspiration; My Big Brother

As he walks towards the podium, you immediately get a sense of his confident yet humble persona. All eyes are on him but he struts like he has been ready for this his whole life. He takes the small rolled-up piece of paper from Principal Lott's hand, and responds to the audience's gaze with one of his infamous goofy heartwarming smiles. There were 1,500 people in the audience at his graduation ceremony, but only I fully felt the ameliorating message of sheer pride that was encoded within his smile. Walking off that stage to join the rest of his graduated classmates did not mean he was walking away from a chapter of his life, but rather, he was preparing to travel along a more challenging but rewarding road to college. And with that diploma in his hand, I knew his opportunities were endless. Who is he? He is my playmate, my protector, my life counselor, and my mentor. He is my brother.

Javier Avalos Jr. has been a leader and a role model all my life. Possessing leadership qualities such as being confident, driven, an active listener, and passionate are all skills that when acquired, should not go unappreciated. My brother is the epitome of this ideal and the manner in which he conducts himself is something one can only aspire to. Entering high school my freshman year, I struggled to find my niche. Thankfully, Javier was completing his senior year which provided an opportune time to learn from him and ease into this awkward high school experience. Aside from being fairly popular, he was also captain of the football team, captain of the wrestling team, maintained a G.P.A. of 4.1, and the new founder and president of his club called "Latinos Unidos." Initially I decided to use his new club, Latinos Unidos, to my advantage by joining and making new friends. But what I got was much more than that. Nothing has been more inspiring to see than my older brother devoting countless time and energy into this club which was focused on encouraging Latino students to go to college and to pursue a career. Many of the administrators at my school disapproved the founding of the club because they felt a club for Latinos was not going to be successful. This sentiment only made Javier more motivated and determined not only for himself, but for all of us, to do well in high school and become more educated about the benefits of going to college. We had fundraisers to raise money for field trips to college tours, we went to many inspiring M.E.C.H.A conferences, we had guest speakers from different colleges come in to speak with us, and we helped out a high poverty elementary school with a majority of the students being Latino by volunteering as tutors. All of the members of the club respected his opinion and decisions, and therefore, trusted his teachings of college. Thanks to Javier, all but three of the original members of Latinos Unidos are in college. The three that are not in college are still juniors in high school. I am one of those three. But my dream is to be an influential leader in society, a leader with a college diploma.

I am now an 11th grader at Mira Loma High School and still look up to my older brother. I would like to think I have grown into a respected leader much like Javier. I have a weighted G.P.A. of 4.17, I volunteer for the California Youth Court as an attorney's apprentice, I am Senior Manager of the honored Arcade Creek Project, I am Captain of the Girl's Varsity Soccer Team, I am the Head of Peer Counseling, I am Student Body Supreme Court Justice, I am Secretary of Latinos Unidos, and I am

currently campaigning to be Student Body Vice President. My focuses and passions are not quite the same as his, and the organizations I am a part of reflect this. But the life skills and leadership conduct I have learned from him have been very useful and applicable to many different situations. And although he is six hours away, he continuously impresses me with his love for the community and his success at whatever he does. He attends Occidental College in Los Angeles and has been awarded many scholarships for his academic excellence and his passion for helping people. On my next visit to Occidental, I may not feel comfortable in the college environment just yet, but I know there will always be a goofy smile and a leader waiting to embrace me.

Jose Castellanos

April 23,2009

Life Influence

Since the minute I burst into the world my parents have lead me through my entire life. I have attained in depth the differences between good and evil and the steps to apply in the real world. However, I believe with further due that my father has had a greater impact on me in various matters. From simply having a great time playing tennis to discussing world issues in depth, my caring father is my idol.

Last quarter, I earned myself a good GPA of 4.17. Many people believe being sharp is memorizing the text but they are definitely mistaken. My father always says " what is the point of learning so much, and not putting it to use." I have come to understand that this is a very important subject that my father mentions: if I am going to become someone in life I have to be responsible and clever in all sense of the word. In college, a student will no longer just have to memorize the answers but they will have to apply what he or she learned out into the real world.

Another characteristic about my father is that he is strongly opposed to improper etiquette. Now, one may ask why proper etiquette is important, and I would gladly explain. Suppose you are an owner of a multi-million business. You have an empty occupation,who will be taking care of money and supervising. It is most likely that you would pick someone that is well dressed,has a good reputation and very respectful, otherwise you would not pick someone that has tattoos and is bagging their clothes. Having a well representation and proper manners is an honor that my father has always taught me and I progress forward each day i have come realize the fruits of its labor. Not only has this instruction opened opportunities in life for me but it also gives you the privilege to meet sophisticated people like myself.

My father is very athletic like myself and we enjoy playing tennis. To some if may seem insignificant to spend time with your dad but I believe it is necessary. I always seek my father, not only when it is an academic problem (I actually help him); however when it is personal as well. For example just recently I broke up with my girlfriend and I experienced the most excruciating pain of love. Fortunately, my father aided me and advised me until everything was resolved.

Furthermore, my father and I enjoy discussing world issues. Such things like what is it that the US government hides from the public or even global warming. For example, just yesterday my dad and I were passing through Gorman heading to Riverside and we saw all these places that seem livable however they were enclosed by "barbed wire", why in the world would someone pay to enclosed an abandoned place with barbed wire in the middle of no where. I thank my father for having these discussions with me because it just makes my life a little more aware and interesting.

If I had the chance to change my life I would not do it for all the gold in the world because I would have my dear father. I am sure that the education and instruction that my father has taught me I am ready for whatever the cold naked world launches at me.

A Better Future

At some point, the life of any teen can be described as wild and rebellious. This, along with many other terms, perfectly describes my aunt Maria when she was a teen. She hated going to school so she would ditch and she would talk back to her teachers. She wouldn't do her homework or her chores and she didn't like to help others but she would expect others to help her with nothing in return. Many people thought of her as a bad child and they believed that she would end up as a nobody, but they were wrong. Now she is the total opposite of what she portrayed as a teen and it is all thanks to her realizing her own mistakes. She went to college, received a degree in social work, and is now a full-time teacher. My aunt Maria is my role model because she has shown me that although she made many mistakes, she was able to turn around and make something of herself. She showed me that anything is possible if you just believe in yourself.

Everyone in town knew my aunt as a rude, obnoxious child because of the way she behaved, but she didn't care. People would talk about her, and she would just threaten them which added to her already bad reputation. Her teachers would complain about her and she would get punished by my grandparents, but she didn't seem to be affected by it in any way. She didn't care much about school because all she wanted to do was have fun with her friends. People would tell her that she should change her behavior and attitude because it would be the best for her, but she didn't listen. All she wanted to do was to live in the moment and not worry about the future.

When my aunt was in her last years of high school, she started to realize that what she had done was wrong. She started to change her attitude towards others as well as the way she behaved. She asked her teachers for help to get back on track and she was able to graduate thanks to them. With the help of her teachers and a couple of family members, she went to college and later graduated and received a degree in social work. It took her a while to get their trust and to have them believe that she had truly changed, but she managed to do it. They were a bit shocked at her sudden change but were happy for her and glad about her decision. This, she says, was the best thing she could have ever done.

No one ever thought that the rude child who almost everybody had something to complain about would end up being such a successful and a great person. My aunt started as a substitute teacher but is now a full-time middle school teacher. She also devotes her time taking care of my sick grandparents and on her free time, she helps around her community in any way she can. She is willing to do anything for anyone who needs her help if they ask her for it. She tends to put others before herself because she says she likes the feeling of accomplishment she gets when she helps someone. She always gives great advice which is why I always go to her when I need someone to talk to because I know I can trust her. She always tells us her story to remind us that we shouldn't take life for granted and that we should make the most of it because it will pay off in the future.

My aunt Maria is my role model because she has shown me that although she made many mistakes, she was able to turn around and make something of herself. She started off as a bad child who didn't care about anything and just wanted to have fun, to a

responsible person who got her degree and lives a life she wouldn't trade for the world.
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Reminisce on memories throughout your life so far. Do you see good times? Do you see bad times? Now look around you. Your surroundings might be trees and pets, or friends and family. Whatever image pop ups in your head, think of the person that is there with you most of the time. Who might that be? When looking back through the laughter and joy, along with the sadness and discomfort, I see my mom. I see her being there for me when I'm down, but also being there encouraging me during happiness.

If I were to describe my mom, I guess I would say she's an intelligent, loving, kind-hearted, disciplinary human being. By far, she is one of the most accomplished women I have ever known. Growing up with little money, it was an obstacle living the life my mom lived in her childhood. Being a Hispanic woman herself, didn't make things any easier. With four brothers and sisters, whom none of which went to college, along with parents that never attended college, there wasn't any encouragement on how important that advance in education was. My mother had to encourage herself, and push herself to succeed in life.

Graduating high school with a 3.5 GPA, my mom decided that she was going to do anything she could to go to college. My grandparents didn't teach any of their children how to speak the Spanish language, so my mom was oblivious to that. But, she was able to attend Cal State University of Northridge with a National Hispanic scholarship. Before attending this school, though, she attended UCLA, where she met my father, who is 100% Caucasian. At 18, she had my older brother, Corey and had to drop out in order to take care of her son and husband. Being as strong as my mom was, she was able to go back to college before she knew it. She then attended Northridge, and graduated with a BS, Bachelors in Science degree, and Business Administration. At the age of 25, she had me.

Being the first generation of going to college in her family, she was very proud. Why wouldn't she be? It takes much effort and self-determination in order to convince yourself you can go to college and graduate, no matter the disadvantages that got in her way. Taking care of her family and succeeding in life was her main goal. She got a job at Fresno Unified as an accountant, and was very good at what she did. As life went by, both her sisters, who were older, had passed away before reaching the age of 40, which was extremely devastating. She handled it well, though, and worked even harder for them, knowing they were proud of what she's accomplished. She continued working at Fresno Unified for six years and was then transferred over to City of Clovis. She was much happier.

Taking care of her family and having a successful life was her main goal. I look up to her and she is my role model. Going through the life she went through, with no encouragement in education and no money, yet being able to live successfully today and graduate college, helps me understand that I can do anything as long as I believe in myself. She has shown me courage and determination. No matter what obstacle life handed to her, she always dealt with it and moved forward, still accomplishing what she wanted to accomplish. My mother always tells me, graduate high school; go to college; then get married. Not only do I want this for myself, but I want to make my parents, especially my mom, proud of me. I WILL be second generation to go to college. Thanks to my mom, I believe in myself, and I know I can be whatever I want to be, as long as try

my hardest and get an education; disregard all obstacles, and move forward; I will be successful and happy.

Have you ever wished you had someone in your life who you can talk to and trust? I do not have to wish for that person because I have Sofia Rizzo. She is my high school guidance counselor. I appreciate everything she has done for me. I know that whenever I have a problem I can tell it her. Mrs. Rizzo has achieved so many goals in her own life, including graduating from Fresno State University. Mrs. Rizzo also has many personal qualities that make her an inspiration to me.

One of those qualities is optimism. Mrs. Rizzo is a very optimistic person; she is always thinking positive things. She has helped me with my problems when I think they cannot be solved. I also know that I can trust any advice she gives me, because she is a very smart and responsible person. For example, one day she called me into her office and asked me, "Salvador, have you heard about AVID?" "What's AVID?" I said. "AVID is Advancement Via Individual Determination" she said. I thought to myself "Determination? I know I have determination to succeed in life," So I asked Mrs. Rizzo to tell me more about AVID. "Well, AVID is a program designed to help students succeed in colleges and universities. Students in the program commit themselves to improvement and preparation for college." As soon as she said that I knew that I should get into that class, but I was afraid to try something new. It meant that my class schedule would have to be changed, so I asked her if I could think about it. She said it was okay, but I had to let her know by Monday because there were more students who wanted to get into the class. That day I went home to think about my options. I knew that I wanted to go to college and that this program was going to help me, so the next day I went to her office and I told her, "put me in AVID please." She told me, "I know that you can do it Salvador. You are smart, and I know you can achieve any goal you select in your life."

Thanks to Mrs. Rizzo, I am aware of the many opportunities that are offered to students like me in order to achieve our dreams of graduating from a four-year institution. Mrs. Rizzo and I share that dream but the difference is that Mrs. Rizzo has completed her dream of graduating from a four year college, and I am still working towards that goal. I know that it is not going to be easy but if Mrs. Rizzo and other people have done it, I can too. Some people do not understand that being an English Language Learner student is not easy. Coming from another country, not knowing the language, and having to learn a new language can be challenging. I have done it, and now I know two different languages; I am like two different people- how cool is that? Mrs. Rizzo also speaks two languages, so she is a great example of what you can achieve if make up your to do it.

As it is apparent, Mrs. Rizzo has impacted my life in a positive way and it has been due to her personal and professional traits. Just like Mrs. Rizzo, I want to become a positive and influential person who will also impact other people's lives in different ways. I also want to be admired like Mrs. Rizzo because admiration is proof that you are a person with many qualities that will help others by creating an environment of trustworthiness.

The person that I believe that has had the biggest impact on my life would be my precious mother! Her name is Felisa Gomez, was born in San Jose Iturbide, GTO. The main reason why I believe it's her is because she's strong and really loving and never fails to be there for my family and I, even though we do disappoint her at times. I know that one day all her hard work and strength that she has given us and others will pay off. I know that a mother like her I'll never find. In the following paragraphs I'm going to explain why I think shes the one, and give a couple of examples.

First of all, what I adore the most about my mom is that she's extremely tough and strong. She has a strong heart and a strong conscious. My mom has put up with many things that I feel have made her life complicated and tougher at the same time. However, her strength seems to never fade away. She's been trough some difficult obstacles in her life. For example, my dad is an alcoholic, which hurts me to admit. He argues with my mom and insults her in the meanest ways I've ever heard, luckily he's never got to the physical abuse, which I'm really thankful for. He wastes money on beer then on something better and useful. He does embarrass us at times. Me and my other three siblings try and find a way so that he can just stop his drinking because he just depresses everyone in the house, but nope, nothing seems to get through his head! We love him and everything else in between, but were just all tired of it .

Second of all, she has also had a sad and challenging childhood. My grandpa, rest in peace, was also an alcoholic. It's sad because it seems like she has never been able to get away from the same tension in her whole life. I feel bad for her because I can't always do much about everything, so I pressure myself and say, "okay I see how shes suffering, so I have to succeed in school, and get a good career, and I'll be able to help my mom and be someone in this world." That's why I want to get a good job to make my mom proud of me and myself also. Hopefully one day I'll take her on a big vacation to get her mind off of all the stress that shes had for ever. I personally feel bad to see how she struggles. Sometimes she has a hard time to pay off all the bills, but either way tries her hardest to get some food on the table, and still get us what we need, and clothe us. My dad does help her here and there but not much. Although if he'd stop drinking it'd be a lot better and a much bigger difference.

Finally, what I have to say is that I love my mother so much because even though she's struggled, suffered, and stressed a lot she still is caring and loving to us. I look up to her and I hope that one day I'll be the loving, caring, hardworking mother like her, and well if possible, better then she has. I look at her at times and I wonder, "how did she do it to be so strong and still have the greatest heart anyone has ever showed me?" She also supports us so we can be academically good even though she knows that she never got to make it to a college. Hopefully I'll succeed and make her, my family, and myself proud. I also want to set that example for my little sister and help her out in her future. Well those were just some of the reasons why I believe that she's the best thing in my world.

Inspiring Person

While growing up I never had an easy run. Living in a rough neighborhood made it difficult to enjoy my childhood due to several young people becoming part of an idiotic gang. I of course was lead in another path thanks to a young inspiring person named Yer Yang. I was lucky enough to meet her at the age of twelve and she has never left my side. Though the path may be filled with obstacles, she guided me through the correct one with her wisdom. Her advice has opened various doors of opportunities. Because Yer cared so much for my well-being she quickly got me involved in dance and I fell in love with it. Hip hop dance does have a bad reputation, but she never danced in a degrading manner, she would dance like a “guy” and proved to be a strong independent woman. If it had not been for her I would be wasting my life in sorrow like several of my peers.

Yer is only twenty years old but that has never stopped her. She has shown me that nothing is ever impossible. The sky is never the limit. She wants to become a pharmacist, which is why she goes to Fresno State and attends other classes. She also balances a job and two dance teams. That is extremely impressive in my opinion which has given me the initiative and drive to accomplish anything. My life has been impacted by her and I’m very grateful that is has. People can attain their fullest potential the only obstacle is their excuses. I’m amazed at how wise she has become at such a young age.

I know it seems strange that I’m not writing about one of magnificent and devoted parents, but we are always influenced by our parents. Yer Yang has been a positive stimulant in my life providing endless support. We do not look anything alike but she is similar to a blood relative. In my opinion, she has been like an older sister. Sometimes the small movements in life are the most memorable. I have several cherished moments with her and we have even been a near death experience together in a car crash. We have been through a lot and she has never let my side. A role model is a person who has impacted your life and is the reason for a person’s aspirations. Yer has been just that and much more. My life has been shaped through her optimism and emotional support. Words are not enough to describe the huge impact she has made in my life.

I am fortunate to say that there have been many influential people in my life; from teachers to family members and close friends. But the one person who I admire most for everything she has done for me, is my grandmother. My grandmother (we call her “Ama”), Natalie Lerma, is testament of what is known as unconditional love.

Ever since I can remember, my grandmother has always been involved in my life encouraging me (and praying for me) to reach my full potential. Through positive reinforcement, I have accomplished so much. There is nothing that I do not think I can do, thanks to the faith and devotion my grandmother has put into me. She has taught me that I am the only one responsible for my actions, and I and I alone am the only one who can determine my future. Out of everyone I have come across in my life that have inspired me, she is the only one that I know fully and truly believes in me and everything I aspire to be. There has never been a moment in my life where I have come across a situation that I couldn't handle, where my grandmother did not step in and help. Her eagerness to help others has always astounded me. She is always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone from myself to any member of my family, from the neighbor across the street to a stranger. She never judges or cares about why we are in a certain

Situation and although she doesn't solve our problems but she's always there to assist and give a encouraging talk. My grandmother comes from a family of eight and she is the first one in her family to graduate college. She is a retired social worker and through her strong beliefs in the imperativeness of a good education she has instilled in us the importance of taking every opportunity to further our education. During her time as a social worker, she worked with the disadvantaged youth, which strengthened her belief in the power of a good education. My grandmother's goal was to inculcate this in her children that she worked with. During the last four years of her job my grandmother worked with pregnant and parenting teenagers of Fresno County which took her into the junior high and high schools in the valley. Her most challenging teens were those in the rural areas (Spanish-speaking, farm laborers) who do not have the resources available to them that most of us take advantage of. Hearing these stories that she has told to me, has motivated me to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to me.

My grandmother's involvements with me during grade school gave me the courage and drive at a young age to always do my best and strive for excellence. For example, in the third grade, my class participated in Fresno State's Peach Blossom Festival. We were to recite a poem by Walt Whitman and I was very apprehensive about the situation thinking that I couldn't not remember all the words. One thing that sticks out in my head about the day we were to perform was when I was panicking the morning of. With tears in my eyes my grandmother pulled me aside and said to me, “You can do this Eric, you know all the words. Just remember you know the words. And even if you don't, we don't know the words either.” I thought it was so funny that it completely calmed me down. And up to the last year I performed in Peach Blossom, I always thought about what she said whenever I was nervous. I owe it to her receiving the “Superior” award each year. This was a small example of how much of a strong impression she had on me and how I felt about myself. There is no doubt my grandmother will be the one sitting in the audience beaming, when I receive my diploma from a University. And when I leave and go on my own her lessons she has taught me will always have a special place in my head, and the

love she has for me will always have a special place in my heart. And if I can be half the parent she was to me, to my children. I know I have learned my lessons well.

With An Inspiration Comes Its Traits

For many people they see a family member as an inspiration. They aspire to have similar respected traits as their family member does. The person I desire to be like is short, has brown hair, freckles, and it is my mom, Linda Mancilla. Through three incidents my mom and I have been in, she has shown two respected traits and an indecent trait: loving, funny, and dishonest.

My mom always tends towards my needs. Especially when she saved up money to allow me to go to Disneyland. To tend is a feeling or showing love. To pay my way, I had to sell fundraiser candy in order to go. To do this, I sold everywhere I could think of: around town, at school, door-to-door, etc. but I still had one box left. I exhausted all of my options to sell and was defeated. My mom knew I desperately wanted to go, so she saved up her own money to buy the rest of my candy. I felt so ecstatic that I could go and relieved that it was paid for. This taught me how to love someone enough in order to sacrifice something for his or her benefit.

In another event, my mom's humorous trait was displayed. Being humorous means making other people laugh. It happened on a frigid evening at a Christmas party. It was full of colorful food, warm people, and laughter thanks to my mom. She had dressed up as Santa Claus with boots, beard, hat and everything! The sight of her with the stuffing coming out from the sides, her crooked beard, and her hat was sliding off. She did not think we would notice but we did. Her willingness to go to those lengths to make people laugh and enjoy the moment; enlightened me that being funny is something you should not hide.

Despite those respectful traits, on one occasion she was deceitful with me. Deceitful means dishonesty. Now keep in mind, I was around ten and this happened long before the Christmas party. It came about when we were baking sweet, sugary, Christmas cookies. As I was putting the Santa-shaped cookie cutter into the soft dough, she revealed to me that Santa was not real. At ten years old, there I was, flour all over me accompanied with a look of disappointment on my face. I was shocked but my mom's comforting smile helped me get through the news. Later on, I figured she told me this then because I was starting to question his existence as I got older. Even though being deceitful is a bad trait, in that moment I believe it was fine. From this, I learned that in some cases it is fine to lie sometimes, up to a point.

Through all the experiences I have with my mom, I know her traits. She is a loving woman, humorous, and deceitful. I have taken a lot from these experiences with her and it inspires me even more to be like her everyday. Although she is my mom, it does not mean she is perfect. Being that, she will have deceitful traits along with respectable ones, as do we all.

My brother

Today I'm going to write about my big brother Salatiel Ramirez. Maybe you have heard about him in the news or in the sports. He is a great brother. If you know him in person, you would say the same thing as me, "The best brother ever"

When my brother Salatiel was a little kid he was very small. Hahaha get it, was a little kid. Hahaha well when he was 7 he started working at a mechanic shop. Trust me, he knew how to take a motor apart and put it back together. Well it was not easy for him. He, my brother Jose, and my mom were alone. My big brother's dad left them when they were 6 years old. It was very hard. Especially because they lived in Mexico. The life in Mexico is very but very hard. Without someone big, supporting the family is very hard. So imagine how hard it was for my big brother age of 7 at that time. It was really hard for him.

Well he decided that if he wanted to be something big he would have to work for it. But don't get me wrong. He did not mean studying, he meant soccer. Yeah soccer. In my city of Cd.Juarez Chihuahua there's an academy of soccer. Well of course only the super good people go there. Well my brother decided to work out and practice every single day after his work. He practiced for two years! Guess what, he was the best of the best around barely 13! Well a scout heard about him and wanted him to try out for the academy in the city. Well my brother was so happy. He tried out and made it. He was one of the youngest ones in the academy. Well to go pro was still very far from there. He got out of the academy when he was 15 and entered the third division of soccer with the Cobras. He got better and moved to the second division! He was 17 now. Then in only two years, guess what! He made professional soccer. He got moved to first division and was assigned to play for Pumas!

I'm very proud of my big brother Salatiel. He has showed me to never give up. Sometimes I feel to like giving and stopping. But I always remember my brother's advice. He is a role model to me. He went through all that work. He used his time of the soccer academy to work. Imagine working out for about 6 to 7 hours. Then having to go to work after that. He sleeps for about 5 to 6 hours. It was very hard for him.

My brother has never given up and so I won't neither. He is a great brother. Right now he does not play professional soccer. He works in a telephone company in Mexico. He is very successful. All the money that he got for playing 4 years in first division he saved it. It's a bunch! Well he has his family already. He has his house and his things.

I always talk to my brother. He calls me every two days to see how I'm doing. The most important thing is that he cares about my grades. That's how I'm doing in school and that's to never give up. My brother has helped me a lot. He has encouraged me to go to college. He always tells me that to never give up! That's like his model, "Never give up!" Well my brother lives by those words that he has said to me. They have been so important to me. I always remember him telling me those words, so I never give up. I try to be like him, he is my role model. I try to stay out of trouble, like gangs and drugs. Well that is my brother and that's how he has influenced me.

How would you classify a person with the following qualities? He is friendly, joyous, hard to get mad type of guy, volunteers in every aspect, very religious, and attractive too. I think I would put him in the “wow” category. Honestly, I never thought there was a person on earth as close to these characteristics as the guy I know. He is an amazing, awesome, great, good looking, so many qualities defined person. This human being was blessed with the name “Oscar,” otherwise known as Racso. (Which is just Oscar, but backwards!)

I could list so many anecdotes which could reveal Oscar’s persona, but, unfortunately, it would take more than a novel to do so. He is just too good to be true! He is an extraordinary busy person that surprises me everyday with his ability of great time management. Oscar’s schedule is made up of college classes, youth group/retreat reunions and community service/church related objectives. He is the coordinator of the catholic church youth group or as I would say “El Mero Mero!” which means the main one there, with the priest in mind of course. He is very and I mean very religious and he has taught me many things.

I met Oscar precisely in church events. We rarely confronted each other with conversations except with hi and bye, but as time passed we became great friends. In fact, so great that it feels like we have known each other since we could remember. Oscar is currently taking classes at Fresno State to pursue his dream of becoming a veterinarian. While, doing his best for “us” in other words, the Catholic Youth Group. He is always there. Every Wednesday, when the gathering for any interested teen is done. He is spontaneous with ideas and creative as well. He makes sure we have fun that day and also gives us a lecture, paraphrasing what the bible says and what we should try to accomplish.

Oscar has made a positive impact in my life. He has not only taught me the values and morals of life, but has influenced me so much that when I reach adulthood I want to be just like him. Thanks to him, now I know how valuable my family is, the value of education, plus the value of each and every human on this earth. He has taught me that everyone is equal not mattering appearance, race, color etc... Now I see the world a whole new way. I see the happiness, the bright side, the positive mood we should have for everything. But mostly, he taught me that all the bad things we go through are just obstacles that we have to go through in life. And that every negative thing comes out to be positive, and our reward is greater than any bad situations we have had in our life. And lastly, I want to learn how to love god like he does. He loves him with so much intensity and integrity that you don’t have to know him to realize his love for the lord. I would say, that when Oscar’s time comes to leave this earth, he is going straight to heaven.

Armed with steel wool, Lysol, Ajax, Easy-Off, and Windex, my role model prepares herself with the tools of her trade. “Cleaning lady,” “The Maid,” and “The Help” are the names used to describe my role model. I see love, dedication, and spiritual faith as the real tools of her trade. “The Miracle Worker,” “Relief Pitcher,” and “One in a Million” are the words that more accurately describe her. My role model is my mother, and she has inspired me to become successful in anything I pursue. Although I’m not certain yet what my career path will be, but I am absolutely certain that the most important tool of my trade will be my college degree.

My mother is a humble woman who grew up in Mexico, living in poverty. When she was about the same age I am today, she immigrated to the United States. Although the United States symbolized success in her mind, it would be decades before she could live a comfortable life. She cleans houses for a living – struggling to provide for me and my brothers. She has back problems, and comes home exhausted at the end of her work day. Her struggles have taught me that no matter what situation or challenge I am faced with, I can overcome the obstacle by focusing on the characteristics my mother taught me. These characteristics include honesty, hard work, integrity, and having faith in God. She has taught me that with these tools I can become anything I dare to dream. We have been forced to move to a different home many times, in many different cities. Unfortunately I’ve transferred to at least a half dozen different schools since kindergarten. Although we’ve transplanted our personal belongings, lost old friends, and quickly adapted to new environments, the one thing I can rely on is my mother’s strength and support. Her encouragement and wise words have given me the courage to excel in my studies and to remain focused on my long-term goal. I am proud to say that I hold a 4.0 GPA, and am currently enrolled in Honors Chemistry and pre-AP Algebra II, and rank #46 out of 798 students in my sophomore class.

Without the support of my mother, I would have shriveled emotionally when people put me down. I would have bowed my head in humility and put aside my goals. Without her words of wisdom and encouragement I would likely become a housekeeper, living an unfulfilled and unhappy life, and repeating a cycle of poverty. My mother has inspired me to become the confident Latina I am today, and that is why I am so proud to call her my role model.

There are many people who have been positive influences throughout my life, but the one that stands out the most is my own grandfather. He is the one who practically raised me, tells me about how this world used to be, and encourages me daily. He is truly a great man.

One reason he has had such a significant impact on my life is simply time. He was the one person who spent the most amount of time with me during my childhood. Since both of my parents are teachers, they would leave before I woke up and wouldn't (and still don't) get home until after five o'clock in the afternoon. So I was left under the care of my grandparents; but my grandmother was also a teacher until her retirement seven years ago. As you can see, it ended up usually just being me and my grandfather. Even though he was already in his seventies, he would walk me to the park almost daily and play with me there. We would end up staying at the park until it was dark, but he never complained. We just had fun and enjoyed being together. I knew I could count on him to take good care of me. Even now, I can almost taste the savory *sopa de fideo* he used to cook for me as my daily afternoon snack. Up until the time we moved out of my grandparents' house when I was six, he even read me bedtime stories. It wasn't until I was older that I realized he actually made up the stories to go along with the pictures in the books. My grandpa simply understood that I needed a bedtime story, so he gave me a story. My teachers, my coaches, and my classmates all changed during my childhood, but the one dependable constant in life was, and still is, my grandpa.

Another way my grandfather impacted my life is by telling me about his time growing up. Through what he tells me of his life, I can weave a picture in my head of the triumphs and trials he's experienced. Now my grandfather wasn't someone famous like Caesar Chavez, but his testimony is just as important. Born in Arizona in 1931, he returned to Mexico with his family for the first ten years of his life. However, by the age of eleven, his father sent him back to the United States to earn money for the family. Although my Grandpa doesn't like to talk about that time in his life, I can only imagine what it must have been like to be eleven years old, separated from his family and on his own. Despite such hardship, my grandpa worked in the fields for over fifty years, earning an honest living to support himself and later his family as well. He lived in Delano for most of his life and sometimes endured outright discrimination simply because he was of Mexican descent. He still vividly remembers how the movie theater, schools and other public venues had signs reading: "For Whites only." And the places designated for Mexicans and other ethnicities were often unsanitary and in poor condition. This is a part of his life that I find particularly fascinating, for you never really hear about the discrimination against Mexicans. This is a side of history that was never part of my school history books. If it wasn't for my grandpa, I would have never even realized that part of history existed. Even when one of my social studies books mentioned the United Farm Workers union, its account of history could not measure with the stories my grandpa told me about actually marching with the UFW in real life. Clearly, the stories of his life experiences have been a profound impact on mine.

In addition to telling me about his life, my grandfather has always emphasized the importance of a good education. An education is an experience that he has regretted missing in his life. For that reason, he has always encouraged me to do well in school

both in academics and extracurricular activities. He has encouraged me to participate in everything from sports, to band, choir, and drama productions. He even gives me money every day for my lunch at school because he knows my parents can barely afford to pay the tuition. As we drive away from my humble home on the way to the school bus every morning, he reminds me that an education is worth sacrificing material possessions and I should make the most of my academic opportunities. Daily, I strive to follow his advice to make him proud of the young lady that I am growing up to be.

So while many people have influenced my life to make me who I am today, the person who has had the biggest impact in my life is my grandfather. He has continued to lovingly spend time with me daily, share his life experiences, and encourage me to take advantage of my education to make me a better person. I am truly blessed to have such a great man in my life – my grandpa.

I admire....

Starting as complete strangers, one second is what it takes for that stranger to walk into your life, and to be the person you would know as your "guider". "How is everything going?"; "Are you okay?"; "Anything you need help with?" Those are just a few questions I would be able to answer daily. The lady asking them was my dear friend from church. She was my "mentor", our high school youth leader for some time. That was until she started school. Her name is Tiffany Dedmond. Other than my parents, she is someone who I admire, respect, and look up to the most. She is: very fun to be around, very energetic; like you could always feel the warm presence, before she even smiles, or makes the smallest sound. An amazing lady of God, someone whom I can share my thoughts, with her voice she can brighten anyone's day, I can say from experience, because she has always blessed my days..

No matter what I go through, I know that with her help as well I can pull through. She has helped me get through; overcome a lot in my young life. She showed me how God can really really impact someone's life because I seen it in her, while He's working in me. I seen the most amazing things and I will remember how it was when God used her to help me.

One day I was having trouble. I felt like I had to call her and be open to her about it, something I haven't done before, but I trusted her. I opened up, tearing up, and expressing how I had been feeling. She always has something to say to me. Something to reduce my fears, to encourage me more, or even just to make me happier than that second I was before. I just started crying, and hoping things would someday get better. She would reply to what I had said, very peacefully. Praying with me, talking to me, and being like my serenity. It felt like a huge warm blanket just swept over me and wrapped around me, very tightly. It's very good to feel how God can use her to bless my life. She has made a huge impact in my young life, and that day I will remember like a story in my life. I had felt better than I did before, I could breathe in pure happiness again. She taught me how to really forgive and let things go, because honestly a lot of things were hard for me at the time. Yes I do consider myself a Christian I know I'm supposed to forgive, just, some things I couldn't let go of. But now, it is a lot easier for me; forgiving, not always forgetting, but letting the past stay behind and hope for a better future in me I will find, come along.

Now every tuesday I have high school youth group. For awhile in a month, she would pick me up to go experience youth group with me; it was good for her classes she was taking at Fresno Pacific as well. The car rides back and fourth were always very close. I could tell her any little thing; something that made me extremely happy, something that made me go on sadly, or just any thing randomly. Boys in my life, the love in hers, school, and friends would always come up. But no matter what, we got to strengthen our walk with God and explain it to each other. Laughing, crying, weird, and silly, were moments we got to enjoy together. We would sing together, I would show her the new songs I wrote at the time, and just go crazy about every little thing that we said, let it pass by. We have a strong connection, a bond that can't ever be replaced. I can never forget how much memories we have made. Because I love that lady with all my heart

And I think of everything we shared between our smiles and our tears every single day. My life is full of joy now. The past few months have been a bit hard, but I got through them and I know that every single day might be a struggle, but I can get through it. I have hope now, and I am much stronger now as well. Now, thinking of her, I want to be a youth leader sometime after starting college, and I hope that someday teens will look up to me, for guidance and some peace. Once I get married, I will want to travel a little and help children in need, as well as speak of the Gospel. I want to provide care as trained for nursing, and to be able to help save someone's life, literally.

Along the process of life, you meet someone who changes your life in a good or bad way. The person who I admire the most has helped me to overcome all things that come my way. His title is Mr. Maldonado but he is more than just a teacher; he is a mentor and a source for inspiration. He has taught me things that I hope to pass on to my kids and loved ones. Mr. Maldonado has inspired me to follow my dreams through his words and actions.

One of the things he engraved in me was to never stop working to make my dreams come true. He told me that I would always have to work harder than anybody to succeed because of my socioeconomic status. Mr. Maldonado taught me to see my mistakes and sufferings as tools to become stronger. He believed that suffering only made someone stronger. Mr. Maldonado taught me that as long as I worked, I would be able to chase down my dreams.

Another resource Mr. Maldonado handed down to me was that nothing impossible exists. He showed me that as long as I believed, there was nothing that couldn't be done. Mr. Maldonado led me to believe that the word impossible was just an excuse to fail. Mr. Maldonado taught me that all things in life were obtainable.

The last and most important way Mr. Maldonado inspired me was through his actions. He always spent extra time making sure all his students learned the material. He was always the first to arrive to school and the last to leave school. He was always willing to sacrifice his time and energy to make sure a student was not left behind. Mr. Maldonado was and still is a person with an open and loving heart.

In conclusion, Mr. Maldonado has paved the way for my success. He was taught me things that will stay with me forever. Mr. Maldonado has made me the person I am today.

“Chayote cocido en un bote con un zapatote lleno de...” that is one song I will always remember because it was a way we could get her mad. I recall when I used to live in Mexico and one of her many boyfriends would go home and visit her. Me and my little brothers would go out and sing that song in front of them. The place had a beautiful view, and they were talking and looked so in love. Then we would appear and start singing...I could tell it bothered her, my sister, Mary. After I saw how annoyed she looked, I would stop and go inside. Those times were the best, times in my childhood that I will never forget. My relationship with her improved as time passed and we grew up, realizing that we needed of each other.

I was in fourth grade and one day when I got home from school I noticed Mary was not there, my sister told me that she had left. “Where to?” I asked my other sister, “Al Norte,” she responded. I was so disappointed because (I cannot lie about this) even though I loved all my family, my sister is one that I admire and my favorite sister too, I was going to miss her for sure. I thought that night about the advices she had given me, because she was not only my sister, or friend, but also my counselor.

Time passed and then came the news that we would move to where my sister was, I was so thrilled. She is a person I really admire; I have told her how much I esteem her. She is a hardworking person, ever since she moved she has been struggling to overcome her obstacles in life. As soon as she got here, at a very young age (17 years old), she found a job and worked towards her dream. She would send us clothes and money back home. I would always say, “When I grow up, I want to be like her.” She has strength of character, a person that gives without expecting anything in return. She is a very optimistic person that knows what her values are. She would tell me that I should never forget who I am, where I came from and where I am thriving towards to.

I learned by heart a phrase she told me: “Don’t ever let anyone or anything put you down.” This is something that really motivates me to do better every time someone says no to me. Such words as those are ones that inspire me to get up from a certain situation and aim higher in my life. She also made me understand that we are what we believe we are, that are worth depending on what we have in our heart and mind, and that we achieve what we dream with intensity.

I admire the way she handles all her challenges in her life. She has her own problems and expenses, but still she keeps on being so generous. Her behavior upon hardships makes me understand that my problems now are nothing compared to what her life and her obstacles are. Her belief of living her life is to enjoy every moment and live with no regrets. To let God guide my life into the path he has prepared for me.

Without noticing at the time, I realize that Mary has influenced my life. She is the reason of why I am here writing this statement about her. When I go through complicated times, I think of her and how she has persuaded me to be a person totally different of what I could have been. I could have easily done the wrong actions, like ditching classes, or doing stuff behind my parents’ backs, or doing awful at school, but she was always at my thought, which made me choose a firm decision, and perform a certain action and the consequences were constructive on my life. I consider myself as a dreamer, because Mary has always believed in me and on my goals. She has made an impact every time I

would cry and she'd hug me, when I was indecisive and she would advice me, and when I looked upon her and she would be there.

Yadira Contreras
Hispanic Youth Essay
27 March 2009

In various aspects of my life, several people have influenced me. Some of my past and current teachers have compelled me to improve through persistency and good leadership skills that will drive me to excel as a student now and in the future. A project recently finished in my finance and marketing class about non-profit organizations inspired me and provided motivation in creating my own non-profit business in the future. After researching non-profits, I became knowledgeable of the contributions and endeavors of individuals involved in non-profits not only to help society, but also to change the futures of the needy. Numerous individuals, who've been through difficult lives and happen to be famous, also inspired and helped me imagine myself as a business woman in the future. However, out of all the people I have encountered in my life, my dad is who I admire the most. My dad has taught me the importance of success, family values, and to overcome obstacles in life through ambition, responsibility, and determination.

My dad is one of the most ambitious people in my life. During his childhood, my grandfather ended my father's education by forcing him to work. My dad didn't have any alternative, but to work as hard as he possibly could. When he was about fourteen, he decided to immigrate to the United States and start working to receive a better paying job than in Mexico. He always makes things happen for himself rather than waiting for them to happen to him. He taught me to not be satisfied with what I achieve, but rather try to challenge myself and be ambitious of how I can do better and receive better outcomes. His ambitiousness passed on to me, and has helped me achieve my goal to get a 4.0 GPA, and so far, I'm achieving it. As of right now, my ambition to become a successful entrepreneur has driven me to taking education extremely seriously. On my dad's side of the family, he's the only one who worries about everybody and tends to help them when needed. If my grandmother requires any assistance, he takes full responsibility and doesn't rely on my uncles and aunts, who never agonize about anything or take any responsibility whatsoever. In my dad's business, his clients are always satisfied with the responsibility he takes. When there's a need to fix something, he does it without any complaint. He balances his responsibility in both his business and our family in a way which I admire. Even though he spends hours working everyday, he somehow always has time to help me or give me what I need. When he said he's going to be there at a certain time he gets there. I relate to him in this way because in Keyclub, I spend my time serving the community. People sign up to volunteer and end up not attending the events, but I do because I understand the value of my responsibility and to always have my word. At school, my sense of responsibility has driven me to become a good student and turn in assignments before deadlines.

Moreover, my dad's determination has taught me to set my mind to accomplish my goals now and in the future. Whenever I try to give up, he tells me, "Nothing is for free" and "You need to work hard and set your mind to it in order to achieve it." My dad has

been through many obstacles in his life but still works so hard to give my family and myself everything.

Overall, my dad is a kindhearted, strong willed, and admiral person. He's caring and loving when it comes to spending time with family. He works so hard to please others and assist those in need that sometimes, he doesn't really spend time thinking about himself. I couldn't ask for a better dad; he has not only taught me the importance of success, but also family values. Despite the challenges he's been put through, he has prevailed through his ambition, responsibility, and determination, which has tremendously impacted my life and future.

Identifying only one person I admire and who has had a positive impact on my life is difficult. It is not difficult to identify one. It is difficult to identify just one because I've had the privilege of knowing several inspirational people who have shaped the person I am today.

The first person I admire and who has most influenced me is my mother. She pushes me to do better than my best. My parents divorced when I was 3 years old, and mom raised me as a single parent. She supplemented my daily homework with additional reading and math problems, followed by violin practice. Back then I was annoyed but today I am appreciative. Those long summers of playing "cash register" taught me how to calculate change at a store faster than the computer (which always makes me smile). The additional hours practicing my violin helped me to become a strong cellist. This month I am auditioning for a music scholarship, challenging myself to perform a very difficult piece for a solo cellist – Johan Sebastian Bach's Courante, Suite No. 1, in G Major. While it would have been much easier to perform something much easier and familiar to me, I welcome the challenge to push myself further. My mom's strength pushed me to do things like teach myself algebra so I could advance a year in math, get straight A's, participate in varsity tennis and soccer tournaments, and volunteer my weekends at community events. I can thank my mom for my resilience and stamina, and this is why I don't become flustered, irritated, or tired.

The second person who has inspired me is my stepfather. My biological father moved to Southern California when I was 3 years old, and I see him only a few times each year. Although he has been absent most of my life, I am blessed to have a stepfather who has made a positive impact on my life. My stepfather has taught me we all have gifts to use for the greater good and that I should use my gift of a scientific mind to help my own people. I know my calling is medicine and he has always supported my life goal of becoming a neurosurgeon. Although he is not a doctor or scientist, he has consistently found medicine-related events to take me to, provided me with books and resources related to my interest in medicine, and has encouraged me to reach as high as I can to make my goal a reality. He has shown me how my work as a neurosurgeon can make a significant impact in my community, the United States, and possibly the world.

Another person I admire is someone I have never met. His name is Dr. Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa. As a young boy, Dr. Quinones-Hinojosa was a migrant farm worker in the Central Valley, with limited English speaking skills. When he was old enough he enrolled in English classes at Delta College in Stockton, worked very hard, and eventually received a scholarship to UC Berkeley and later to Harvard Medical School. Today, Dr. Quinones-Hinojosa is the Director of the Brain Tumor Program at John Hopkins Medical Center, as well as a practicing neurosurgeon and professor at the University. As a researcher, he is constantly trying to identify breakthroughs in the treatment of brain cancer. I am motivated to excel in medicine (specifically neurobiology) because of the inspiration I have received indirectly from Dr. Quinones-

Hinojosa. Knowing his struggle and accomplishments makes me believe that my dream to become a neurosurgeon is plausible.

I have set very high goals for myself. I wish to be the first Latina Board Certified Neurosurgeon in the United States. I also wish to become a member of Los Médicos Voladores or the “Flying Doctors.” Some may say these goals are out of reach except for the few truly gifted and talented, and others may say they are simply impossible. I say that I can accomplish these goals because I know these three persons who are my inspiration, motivation, and role models. Every day I strive to do my best to make them proud, but also to prove to myself and the world that a Latina can be something great.

Jovanna Martinez

02/26/09

I always think of this topic day to day, and the same answer always comes up. My hero and someone that I admire is my mother. This must be the usual answer that most entries say, but how could I answer different. There have been so many mistakes in the past that I have overcome and she was always there for me. She was there to yell, cry, laugh, and take the pain for me. She is someone I can look to academically, spiritually, and emotionally. Without her I wouldn't be where I am today. Of course this is true because she is my main provider for everything but it is much more than that.

My mother has struggled through so much in her life. At a young age she achieved her bachelor's degree in Mexico. It wasn't easy though, she had to do that and take care of my newborn older brother alone and soon after my older sister. My father wasn't exactly the best father figure and left her, so she was alone and she did it. I have never really discussed with her about that time in her life, but I know it was a hard time in her life. My father eventually came back to her and they traveled to the U.S because they needed support from my family here in California. Soon there I was born and my mother found a well paying job to support her family. Overtime my father and mother had continuous relationship problems. When I was around 12 or 13 they separated and filed for a divorce. This was an extremely difficult part of my life because, I had to see my mother go through pains and struggles I which I will never go through. She always told me and continues to tell me that you can't rely on a man for anything; you need to set up the foundations you need to be able to support yourself. So when a time comes where you are forced into a hard spot you are able to continue living happily without leaning on a man to survive. My mother is a very intelligent and wise woman. She overcame her divorce and got full custody of us just like we all wanted. Right now she is continuing her education and is revalidating her bachelors so it can be certified here in the United States. She had a high paying job so we can live comfortable and happy.

I myself have gone through a lot of mistakes and am paying the consequences for them. I have to admit my mother is a very disciplined and strict woman. She will not put up with nonsense and stupid decisions that I keep setting myself up into too. I am constantly getting myself into trouble, but she is always there to bring me back into her trust. I really don't know how much I can keep relying on my lucky chances to stay in her good graces. We have screamed and yelled at each other and I have cried that I can't have her as a mother and I hate her. This is not true though. I realize now that I am thankful for her discipline and constant expectations on me, because there are hundreds of parents that don't even bother on what their kids do and most of those kids end up with low lives and no cares in the world. My mother is nothing like that, she is constantly on me to do better and achieve more in life. I am so grateful for this because I have good morals and set high goals for myself. Most of my friends' parents let them do whatever they want, and these friends are doing poor in school and getting into trouble. I am one of the few of my group of friends that want to have a college experience and want to keep doing well in school.

My mother has set the foundations for me, it is up to me to walk the right path and continue to build up in my life. I am not saying I want to be like my mother when I get older, but I would like to have her wise decisions that have kept her going on in life. I am my mother's daughter and I will live life confident. No matter what I will reach my goals and dreams, because my mother will be there to pick me up when I fall.

Alexandria Molina

March 3, 2009

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa is my hero because she was a compassionate woman who put others before herself and helped many people by doing so. She worked hard and gave up everything she had in order to follow the ways of the Lord. She comforted the sick and disabled, opened hospices and orphanages, and encouraged others to get involved in helping the needy. These are only some of the things she has done that prove what a selfless and giving person she really was to others. She is my inspiration and motivates me to want to do more to help others.

Mother Teresa was born on August 26, 1910. Although she was born on August 26, she considered August 27, the day she was baptized, to be her "true birthday." When she was twelve she realized that she wanted to give her life to the church. At the age of eighteen she left home to join the Sisters of Loreto as a missionary. When she said goodbye to her family she never saw them again. When I think about going off to college and leaving my family behind, I know it's going to be a challenge, yet when I think about her giving up everything she had, it inspires me to be strong enough to fulfill my dream of starting my life as a strong and educated woman.

She took her first religious vows as a nun on May 24, 1931. When she was teaching in Calcutta she was bothered by the poverty in that region. A famine in 1943 caused many deaths in the city, and the outbreak of Hindu/Muslim violence in August 1946 caused only more despair to the people in the community. While at the missionaries Mother Teresa claimed to have a "call within the call". She said this call was for her to help the needy. She started an organization called the Missionaries of Charity which gave support to all the people society had pushed aside, such as the blind, poor, lepers, disabled, aged, and the homeless. She and some Indian officials converted abandoned buildings into homes for the dying and homeless. She made it possible for the sick to die with dignity and helped fulfill any religious needs they had. She looked past the discrimination that everyone had against these people and only cared about what she could do for them. What I've done to try and follow in her footsteps is to give back to my community. I've been given the opportunity to work with children in their classrooms to help teach them the skills needed in the classroom and in life. I've also gotten the chance to assist elementary school secretaries, teachers, and a principal so they had more time to focus on students' needs.

Mother Teresa once said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." This tells me that I don't need to worry about doing everything, or overwhelming myself. I just need to do what I can and it'll be enough if I just keep pushing myself to do my best. As of right now I'm doing as much as I can, yet I know I can do so much more in the future. Whether I get into the medical field or education, I can only hope that college will help me gain the necessary tools to help make other peoples' lives better, and to make a difference in society with the newfound knowledge and experiences I will gain.

The one person I admire most in this world is my mother. My mother's name is April, I admire her for many reasons, but it is her strength that pushes me always to do my best, her kindness reminds me that it's always better to give than receive, it is her loyalty to her community and the younger generations that teaches me that I can make a difference in this world, and most importantly it is her unconditional love for her me, that lets me know it's ok to make mistakes, as long as I learn from them.

My mother is not only a single parent of five, but she works part-time, is a volunteer tutor at Ventura Community College, and is a full-time college student. As a single parent she is very involved in every aspect of her children's lives. It has been her main objective at all times is to guide, support and nurtures our individual personalities, ideas, and goals. Instilling strong family and community values has been her highest priority as a parent. Admiration is a word that cannot begin to express how proud I am of this great woman; not only has she risen above her abusive childhood, she has also overcome the negative statistics of being a teenage mom. Though these and many other things in her life could have given her plenty of reasons to give up, she's never even once reflected the spirit of a broken or defeated person. Her spirit has been strong and un-relentless throughout these many years, and to date I come to realize that all these barriers have only made her a stronger woman.

Currently, my mother is working on obtaining her bachelor's degree from California Lutheran University. Upon graduation from Cal Lutheran University she will be able to join the criminal justice system as a Juvenile Probation Officer where she can also work as a youth advocate leader. I am happy to report that her hard work will not end with the California Department of Probation, but rather be a stepping stone to her ultimate goal of becoming a Prosecuting Attorney in child abuse cases. Ultimately she says that her hearts greatest joy will come from working with State and Local Officials in implementing stricter child abuse and child neglect laws that would thus render more severe punishments for those whom chose to inflict harm on innocent children.

The four most important things, my mother has ever said to me is that; one: a great man is not defined by his status in life, but rather greatness comes from a man who shows honor and respect. Two: never to give up. Three: to always set goals and stay focused. Last but not least, she reminds us how important it is to obtain a college education.

For these and many other reasons I admire my mother April Retes and hope one day to make her as proud of me as I am of her.

One person whom I believe has had a great impact on me is my dad, Ezekiel. He has shown me that you shouldn't care what others think - always be yourself.

That life isn't always perfect - you have to get past those hard times.

To always try your best, and be dedicated to your education so that you can be successful. And most importantly, that you should show love and be a friend to all and help those in need.

My dad may seem different to some, but that is one of the things I admire the most about him. Something that differentiates him from other people is his mindset. It's not important to him what clothes he's wearing that day or the state of his car or the different things people become troubled with. Why should we care if our shoes are a couple years old, when there are millions of people that don't even own shoes? I used to really be concerned with the way I looked - especially my clothes. Overtime, though, I became less and less interested in how fashionable my top was that day. Not that I would wear any old thing, it just stopped being a priority. I think this is because of the influence my dad had and still has on me. Even though he didn't come out and say "You shouldn't care so much about your clothes," by observing his attitude, I came to realize that he was right.

My dad is from Brazil, where he lived in a poor neighborhood in Recife. Growing up he didn't always have luxuries and in fact he dealt with many health problems. My dad was sick with tuberculosis for 5 years before the doctors diagnosed what he had. He suffered a lot of pain, not only bodily, but because he was young - about 7 years old, he didn't experience the normal life of a young kid. As an adult, my dad went through other health problems including a phase of depression. Seeing him get through those difficulties, or hearing in the case of the tuberculosis, really made me appreciate good health, necessities and luxuries in life. When I'm overwhelmed with too much homework or stressed by school drama, it looks like nothing compared to what my dad endured.

Education has always been something held at a high place at my house. My dad moved to the United States so that my siblings and I could have better educational opportunities. Both my older brother and sister have been good role models as well as a "goal setter." My parents definitely encouraged doing well in school too, although it wasn't really necessary - I've always cared about my education and been a good student. My dad doesn't just let me sign up to run for class president, he'll ask me why I want to do it and encourage me to think about the time commitment. He spurs me on to be involved and become a leader. He likes to talk to me about school and what I'm learning in my classes. That shows that he really cares and wants to encourage me in any way he can. My dad wants me to be successful at whatever career will make me happy and provide enough support for me.

I love that my dad doesn't judge people by their outside, he truly cares about them. He has befriended countless numbers of neighbors or just people he meets out and about. I find it amazing that even though he's not fluent in English, he gets by with no problem. My dad loves to help his friends, or anyone who needs it really. He is skilled in electrical and carpentry jobs, so there's often a need for a handy man like him. He also is talented with playing guitar and singing, which is something he likes to do with his family and friends. I try to follow his example by being generous and friendly to the people around me every day.

I admire my dad so much for the way he carries himself and interacts with the people around him. He is an excellent cook, electrician, musician, friend and father. I am so thankful for the many lessons he has taught me. He has definitely made a big impact on me.

She arrived to the U.S. in September 2004, two weeks before her birthday. She was turning 19 years old. She had never celebrated her birthday in Mexico due to the lack of money. We threw her a big birthday bash and she was very pleased with the celebration. She didn't speak one word of English so her hopes of succeeding in this English speaking country ran low. She still had hope. The thought of me looking up to a person like her had never crossed my mind. After witnessing how much she has accomplished in these past few years, she has earned my respect and admiration. She is my big sister, Erika Reyes.

After celebrating her birthday my mother, Maria Canseco, couldn't help but spread the word about her wonderful daughter who had just arrived. My mom spent countless hours talking on the phone informing our relatives in Sanger, Parlier, and Reedley about her arrival. After all the calls, our phone seemed to have finally gotten some time to rest. Our neighbor Celia Fernandez came over to our house and started talking about the English classes that were offered at Cesar Chavez Adult School. The great thing about Cesar Chavez is that the classes were free and all they ask for is to pay with your effort and dedication. Realizing that it was a wonderful opportunities, Erika quickly enrolled in the classes.

Even though Cesar Chavez Adult School is located downtown, a twenty minute walk from our home, Erika attended everyday, punctually, for two and half years. She graduated from Cesar Chavez with her GED, and speaking the necessary English needed to make it through life. With this necessary English Erika was able to get a job at King Buffet. Erika had to remain at Cesar Chavez even after receiving her GED because she couldn't get into college. She struggled trying to get into college because she was a foreign student. Finally, in the fall of 2007, she got accepted into Fresno City College. She was so ecstatic about the opportunity that was granted to her.

In order to pay for her college classes, Erika had to get a job that offered a higher salary. She worked at three different jobs before she settled at her current job. She now works as a bus ticket salesperson at an agency for traveling called "Las Tres Estrellas." There she makes enough to pay for her college classes. She presently attends Fresno City College and needs at least one more year to finish her major as a Micro Computer Software Specialist.

I believe that all the accomplishments that she has completed as a foreign student from Mexico over qualifies her as a candidate to receive my admiration and respect. She came with Spanish as her primary language and she learns to speak English and receives her GED, all within three years. She accomplishes all this, while holding a job and being consistent with attending all her classes. Even though people don't notice it, learning to speak English is the door to success. That's how Erika has made it through all these years. By watching my sister Erika I learned that many obstacles exist that will try and keep you from achieving your goal, but you have to fight and keep making attempts to reach your goals. By observing the way she has taken on life by herself she has taught me

that you have to believe in yourself and in your heart and know that you can go onto unimaginable levels. If this wasn't enough for her to capture my admiration, she has left me astounded by the way she has handled her work, her school, and her one and a half year relationship with her boyfriend, Angel. She's like superwoman!

In people's lives, there is always a person who is influential to them. This person is either an idol to them or someone who they are unconsciously influenced by. Everyone has had a role model at one point or another in their lives. However, an idol does not necessarily mean a celebrity or someone who is famous. In fact, an idol can vary from a friend, a parent, a person from history, a sibling, a teacher, or just anyone who has influenced you and your life in any positive way. Overall, my family has influenced me through my whole life, but one person who has advised me on all aspects of my life is my dad. My father plays a significant role in creating who I am today.

To begin with, my father has taught me to act responsibly. He has always told me to think before I act in order to make rational decisions. This advice lingered in my mind but what really affected me were his actions. When presented with difficult situations he didn't act impulsively to resolve the problem as soon as possible. Instead, my father carefully examined the plight and every possible solution his mind could conceive. He considered the consequences of every solution and selected the superior. The solution would resolve the problem and if not then he would deem it as a learning experience. This trait in my father is one which I greatly admire.

Moreover, my dad encourages me to not only learn but to enjoy learning. He advises me to continue my education and focus on an area of studies that interests me. My father, like any other parent, wishes me to create a pleasant and exciting future for myself by opening the door for more opportunities in life. He wants me to do well in school but instead of focusing on my weak points, when it comes to my grades, he congratulates me on a job well done. This motivates me to try harder and do better every time. Consequently, my love of learning is greatly attributed to my father.

Indeed, my dad possesses a positive outlook on life which I have come to acquire as well. Regardless of the difficult childhood my father experienced, he continues to view everything positively. My dad faced many tribulations throughout his life and yet he still has a happy and positive life. Knowing this, I realize that despite any difficulty a person is faced with it is possible to prevail, so when confronted with unpleasant situations, I endeavor to be pessimistic.

In retrospect, my dad has influenced me throughout my life. I have come to enjoy learning, act responsibly, and look at the bright side of the worst situations. Everyone has an idol that they look up to and I am really fortunate to have my dad as an idol.