

My Favorite Older Friend

First Place

Jordan Sayegh

St. Louis School

Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“One of My Favorite Older People”

One of my favorite older people always tells me to enjoy life even though I have been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes this school year. His name is Mr. McKnight. I have chosen Mr. McKnight because we share Type 1 diabetes as our special bond. Mr. McKnight was diagnosed with diabetes at age 13. He has taught me that diabetes does NOT define who I am.

Mr. McKnight told me the true story of when he was diagnosed with diabetes fifty-four years ago. In 1957, he was returning from a school field trip in the 7th grade. He went into a coma from extremely high blood sugar and woke up in the hospital. The doctor tossed Mr. McKnight an orange with a syringe and told him to practice because he would be taking insulin for the rest of his life. The glass bottles needed to be sterilized on the stove top, nothing was disposable. Mr. McKnight has witnessed the change in modern medicine.

When I was in the hospital this past September, Mr. McKnight made a surprise visit to my room with his son (who was diagnosed at my age with Type 1 diabetes also). Since that visit, Mr. McKnight has been a good friend and mentor to me. I know he can relate to testing blood sugar and taking insulin shots multiples times daily. Mr. McKnight always has a good sense of humor and manages his diabetes well. He teaches me good tips and tricks learned from his many years of experience. I know that I can ask Mr. McKnight any question when we are together. Mr. McKnight understands my feelings about diabetes because he can relate to me. Mr. McKnight is one of my favorite older people whom I admire.

My Favorite Older Friend

Second Place

Ravi Krishnan
Jefferson Road Elementary
Teacher: Miss Potenza

“My Favorite Older Friend”

When people ask about my friends, I often reply by mentioning a couple pals in my class. However, I do have a friend who happens to be 59 years older than me and has known me since the day of my birth – he is my Uncle Suresh, or as I call him, Moothapen. Moothapen is a strong-spirited, inspiring, reliable and wise man who brings out the best in everyone.

Moothapen is a great friend because he is one of the very few grown-ups who will descend to my rank of maturity. I don't feel I have to act like a grown-up to talk to him. He actually will talk to me like I'm just as mature and wise as he is. That's why I can talk to him about anything, which makes our companionship very special to me.

Moothapen is diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Unlike some victims of this disease, he maintains a positive attitude towards it. He doesn't let it prevent him from doing what he wants to do and being the person he wants to be. He exercises regularly, plays golf like a pro and even taught me. When he walks in a room, he brings it to life. I think he's a strong man with an outstanding spirit and I admire him for that.

Like good friends do, Moothapen helps me reach my goals. A dream of mine is to one day possess a Ferrari California. Moothapen is a financial wizard and he got me into investing in stocks. He advised me in all the right shares to purchase and that brings me one step closer to reaching my goal. I am grateful to have a friend I can trust and turn my ambitions into reality.

I am blessed to have my friend Moothapen in my life. He inspires me to put my best foot forward in everything I do. This is why Moothapen isn't just my friend, he's my role model and I'm honored to have him as my uncle.

My Favorite Older Friend

Third Place

Maleiah Burney

Brooks Hill School

Teacher: Mrs. Constantino-Nunez

“My Favorite Older Friend”

I can't wait to get home when grandma's there. She's a great cook, tutor, and playmate. She's trustworthy and reliable. Grandma watches kids so she is playful and quite a culinary artist. My favorite is her peanut butter cookies. They are hot, soft, moist golden brown goodies. It's easy to play with my grandma because she has diabetes so she stays fit and healthy using frequent diet and work outs.

Her name is Francine Burney also known as my grandma. My mom works long hard hours so when she gets home she sleeps the rest of the day trying to get energized for her next work shift. Soon when I need help with the struggles and sometimes terror of fifth grade homework or being an only child and needing a playmate, I know I can count on grandma. Mom, usually in a work shift, left grandma to take me to auditions, clubs, and plays, to pick me up, drop me off or look after me while I am there. I do not know what I would do without her!

I'm not going to pretend like grandma and I have the perfect relationship. To tell the truth we argue frequently, but being angry with someone does not mean you love them any less. If we didn't bug each other at times it just wouldn't feel right.

My grandma has a fabulous sense of style. I know because she loves buying me clothes and I don't have any idea why. Sometimes I feel my grandma is just an 11 year old inside an older body. One day when I get older I hope I can stay as fit, playful, peaceful, classy, and smart as my grandma did and will be doing for many years more.

As you can see through this essay my grandma is more like a friend and our relationship will get stronger as time passes. We might argue, but our love and care for each other won't fade. The point of this essay is to say thanks to my and all compassionate, loving grandmas. I'll love my grandma more than the universe itself, forever!

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Lindsey Behrns
Jefferson Road School
Teacher: Miss Potenza

“My Favorite Older Friend”

Six years ago my favorite older friend past away, it was my great grandmother, nanny. My great grandfather, Poppop was left alone at 87 years old, after being married for 70 wonderful years. Poppop is a tall, very smart 94 year old 100% Scottish man. Strict, stern, loving, kind and sweet all in one. After the death of nanny my Poppop was very sad. I knew we needed each other more now than ever. We both had lost our best friend.

Poppop and I have always been close, but I had no idea he would become my favorite older friend.

We spend a lot time together, talking about our awesome memories of nanny, while we make new ones for ourselves. We spend all the holidays together. I love fixing his plate, getting him his drink and helping him walk. He always holds onto my arm and gives me a sweet little squeeze. Poppop loves hearing my horse stories, he even loves watching me at horse shows. I spend time with him at his apartment cleaning for him. We laugh and chat the entire time.

I took Poppop to lunch with my mom and Nanna. He and I did nothing but laugh! I had played the crane game machine and won two animals in one try, a frog and a pig. I gave Poppop the frog, I kept the pig. He was so happy to have a prize from me. Frog now sits by Poppop’s door so every time he comes and goes he remembers our fabulous lunch date.

I know Poppop is my favorite older friend just by the smile on his face, the cheer in his voice, and his great belly laugh.

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Paige Burruto
St. Louis School
Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“Special Older Person”

Would you like to meet someone very brave? If you do, you should meet my Grandpa, my special order person. I call him Papa. He has been through a lot. He had lymphoma, which is a form of cancer. About a year ago, he had open heart surgery. I was there with him as much as I could be, to help him through it. With all he has been through, he is still up and running today. My Grandpa is a very brave man. He is also very smart, and has a great sense of humor. He always helps me with homework, projects, and studying. My Grandpa and I love to play cards, and is very good at it. We also love to garden together. He gets right down on his hands and knees and gardens, and enjoys it very much. My Grandma and Grandpa have a huge garden in their backyard. Every year, I help him to plant all sorts of flowers. We also plant garlic, and sometimes I even help them plant tomatoes and make a salad. The tomatoes taste so good – I love to eat tomatoes from their garden. My Grandpa also loves history. He knows the answer to every question that I ask. Every year our family goes on vacation. It’s my Mom and Dad, my Sister, myself, and my Grandparents. It is very fun to have my Grandpa go on vacation with us. I am afraid to get a little shot at the doctor’s office, but my Grandpa has been through so much – it does not matter to him at all! He is a very brave man, and my special older person.

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Isabel Hartzell
St. Louis School
Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“Favorite Older Friend”

Yiayia (Grandma) makes me feel so happy – like I’m the most precious thing in the world. When she hugs me it feels like I’m being warmed by the fire. When Yiayia kisses me I feel comforted. Yiayia makes me feel strong like a superhero, yet gentle like a deer, beautiful like a model, but prettier than that on the inside and the outside. She makes me feel courageous like a lion, and smart like a genius as well.

Yiayia had a very hard childhood but she is still very kind. She grew up in Greece and lost her mother and brother at age seven during a war. She came to America to go to college and became a teacher. She married Popou (grandpa) who has sadly passed away.

Yiayia always wears a collared shirt in a different color every day. She has her glasses on almost all the time. She has dark brown hair that shines in the sun when she gardens. She has a really “green thumb!” The thing that makes her most special is that her smile makes everyone look and stare and then smile themselves.

Yiayia taught me to knit, and it’s very relaxing and fun actually. She is knitting me some slippers right now. She is also a great cook! She can make something you don’t like and you’ll love it! I sometimes help her cook and it’s super fun!

I wanted to write about Yiayia because she is so special to me and I love her very much! She is the best Yiayia in the whole world!

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Brendan Kepes

St. Louis School

Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“My Gram”

As we roll up the hilly driveway, I can't help but feel excited. The minute Mom stops the car I jump out. I am suddenly greeted by Gram and Grandpa's little frisky white dog, Darby. Darby is quickly followed by Gram; a sweet dark blonde haired woman with a smile that could light up midnight. After a few words on how astonished she is at how I've grown, we wave Mom goodbye and go inside. Grandpa is at work, so Gram has me all to herself. Gram pulls out some snacks and two cakes (don't tell Mom) and we talk about school, and summer vacation. After we finish our delicacy, we go outside to Gram's orchard and pick apples until our arms are sore. Then we go back inside and make apple sauce.

After apple sauce, we go into the living room. The smell of musty old books greets me like an old friend as sunlight pours through the windows. We turn on the television and laugh at old cartoons. My favorite is Tom and Jerry. I like Gram because she understands. She has told me how mischievous she was in her youth. Also, she gives me the responsibility of an adult like cutting the grass and doing adult things that are “too dangerous for kids my age.” She makes me feel good about myself. We go outside with Darby and after a while, hear Mom coming up the driveway. I grumble and complain about leaving, but Gram tells me not to worry. Another day with Gram is sure to come. And with a wink of her twinkling blue eyes, she heads inside. As we drive home, I think that I have a very special grandparent.

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Sam Lewandowski
Jefferson Road Elementary School
Teacher: Ms. Long

“My Favorite Older Friend”

Some kids just say “hi” to their grandfather, leave and start playing video games when they visit. But with all the effort my grandfather puts into making my life happier, I wouldn’t be able to just leave him after a minute of saying “hi.” I want to stay with him and talk to him as much as possible. The bond between my grandfather and me is that strong.

My grandfather, Robert Nerber, is 79 years old and does so many things to make me feel happy out of his kindness and generosity. This is sometimes a challenge for him because of his medical conditions. He comes to many of my soccer and hockey games and has to put up with the blazing sun beating down on his head or sitting on rock hard bleachers in a freezing cold ice rink. I appreciate this more than he probably realizes. He has a back injury that makes it difficult for him to sit on bleachers, but he ignores it and sits through whole hockey games. It is also hard for him to walk to soccer fields because part of his foot has been amputated due to diabetes. I appreciate this so much that when I see him cheering for me in the stands, I feel compelled to put on my best show and play better than I ever have before.

Even when he isn’t on the bleachers wearing his Grizzlies hat and cheering “c’mon Sam!” and even though there are hills and roads separating us, I know that whenever I step off the ice rink or off the soccer field, my grandfather is sitting in his favorite chair in his small house thinking, “Good job Sam. I’m very proud of you.”

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Bridgit Patterson

St. Louis School

Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“My Grandpa”

During his lifetime my grandpa was kind to many people including me. He'd make people's lives a little brighter whether it was sharing a smile or piece of candy or giving someone one of his hugs.

When I was a young girl I would go over to his house. There he would read me stories while I sat on his lap. As he read the story aloud he would never read what was on the pages, he would look at the pictures and tell the story his way. I would say “It doesn't say that.” He would jokingly say either “I forgot my glasses so the words are blurry.” or “I don't really like how the author told the story so I'm reading it how I would've written it”, he'd joke.

During the many summers that we spent at our family cottage my grandpa would always sing to us his special morning song, “Good morning, good morning the sunbeams are showing. Good Morning to you!” or he'd sing the song Teddy Bear's Picnic.

My grandpa had an answer to everything. If I had a problem, my grandpa would be the first I would go to. He was my “go to” guy. He also taught me to put others first by showing me to be kind and compassionate to others and to think of those less fortunate. He would often carry candy in his coat pocket to offer to a stranger. He knew that nothing was quicker to bring a smile to someone's face than a piece of candy; he definitely brought a smile to my face with the candy in his pockets.

After his death, we remember him as a wonderful and kind man. We also remember not what he gained, but what he did give, by setting an example for us and leaving us with great memories of a wonderful life lived.

My Favorite Older Friend

Outstanding Achievement

Ian Richards

St. Louis School

Teacher: Mrs. Martin

“My Favorite Older Friend”

Finally we're here. I am spending the weekend at my Grandma's house. My family and I call her Nana though. I love going there. She spoils me with amazing food and no chores. When I am with her I feel safe from the rest of the world. She was a teacher and helps me with school projects and homework. Nana does all this plus much more. She even plays golf with me. When I am there it feels like I can't do anything wrong. If I do, she tells me some old wise saying like, "If you make a mistake it doesn't mean anything unless you learn from it." It seems like she has one for every situation. Nana can always brighten a person's day with her optimism. When I am sad and angry she tells me to look on the bright side of things and find happiness. She is caring beyond what words can describe. I respect her for her kindness, fairness, and love. I don't just like going to her house, I like being with Nana. I know I can go to Nana with whatever problem I have and she will know the answer and what to do. Nana is always there for me and I have needed her more since my dad died. Ever since I was little, my family and I have been going to her house on Christmas Eve. We eat, laugh, and open presents. We all thank each other for what we have gotten. I can't imagine life without her. Nana has helped me through so many things I could not have done alone. With her I feel amazing. That is my favorite older friend, Nana.