



High Rocks JOURNEYS

from our High Rocks Academy for Girls

FALL 2013






Excerpt by Gillian Plaughner

If I could be any person at all, I would be someone with wit, humor and individuality. I would feel like I could do or say whatever I want and no one could make me feel different about it. I would hang out with everyone and I would be able to see in black and white if I wanted to. I would spend all my time outdoors. I would see trees, and grass, the sky a luscious blue. I could smell flowers and woods. I would touch the dirt and bark on the trees and know exactly where I belong. Bees buzzing and deer snorting, grouse drumming and crows calling.

Gillian



“Nine years ago, I was a shy and terrified 14-year-old girl, whose parents just dropped her off at the top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere. At the end of a week and a half, my shell had been cracked, I made friends with a group of the most amazing girls and women I have ever met, and I was forever changed. The following years came and went. And every year something amazing happened. I know this place held a magic to it I would never let go of...”

by Ashley Fischer
High Rocks Alum 2004

Journal Entry #9

Dear places I do not know,
Dear friend I have not met,
Dear mountains I have
not yet explored,
Dear nature I have not roamed,
Dear food I have not tasted,
Dear pod I have not settled into,
Dear animals I have not heard,
Dear campfire whose smoke had yet
to travel through my lungs...

- 2013 New
Beginnings Girl



Dear Future High Rocks Girl,

When you come here you'll hear laughter
You'll feel soft hammocks underneath your fingertips
You will taste some really good, healthy food
Fresh air is what you'll smell
All you will see are friendly faces
You'll see the cooks dancing in the kitchen and
hear their music playing
The scent of smoke from the campfire will drift through the air
You'll feel a good friend's hand on your back trying to cheer you up
Fresh water is what you'll taste
Surrounding you are the mountains,
one which you will climb with
supportive friends...
Together.

By: Aspan Holder



TRANSITIONS

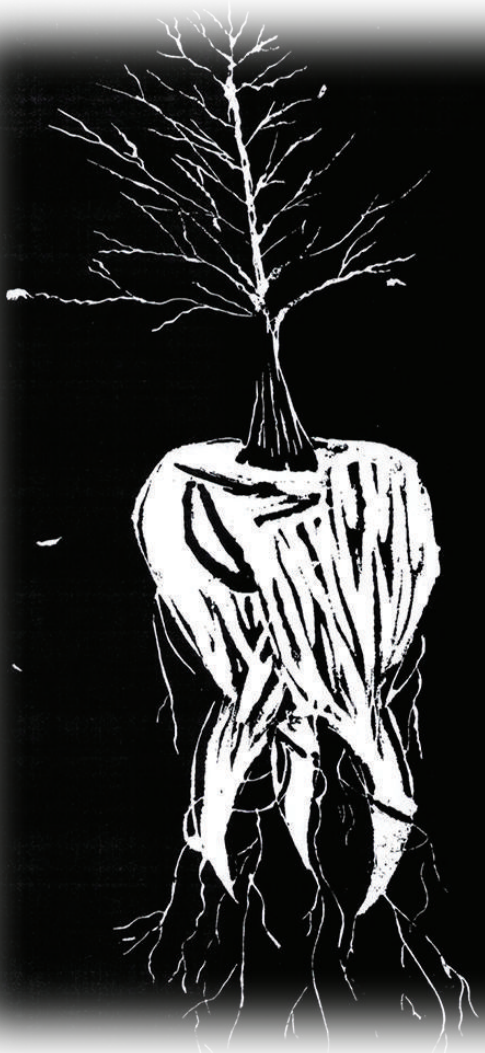
by Sarah Riffey

Quiet child
 With a mouth full of stones
 Lips stitched shut
 No words to speak
 Big eyes full of question behind
 wire rim glasses,
 Now way to ask them,
 No voice to conjure.

Young demon,
 barred teeth and crooked smiles
 Sliding in the shadows,
 No longer the child
 No longer quiet
 My throat
 No longer wrapped in barbed wire
 Fearless thing
 Diving from the roof top onto the concrete
 No way to love this creature.

Woman of the feather,
 Strewn on the loveseat
 Long hair tangled and wavy
 Naked legs, pale, scarred
 Hanging over,
 Free spirited woman dancing in the petals
 Shedding tattered skin
 Writing the past in my ancestors ink.

Sarah Riffey

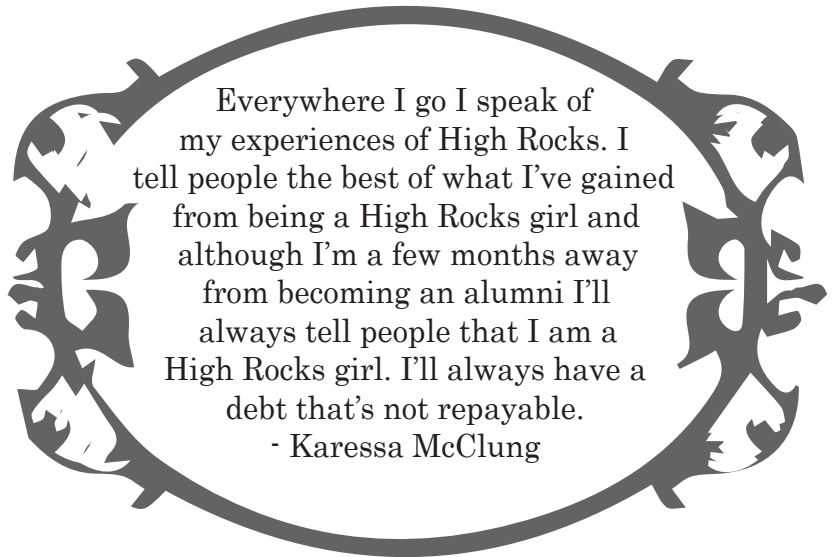


Welcome to the life...

by Lillian Lane

Welcome to the life affirming experience
My era will never be the same
Face the music
The best of the joyful noise
True lives as it sees the old master
Joy is round
Wild life a revelation road.

Lillian Lane



Everywhere I go I speak of my experiences of High Rocks. I tell people the best of what I've gained from being a High Rocks girl and although I'm a few months away from becoming an alumni I'll always tell people that I am a High Rocks girl. I'll always have a debt that's not repayable.
- Karessa McClung

I AM ME

by McKayla Forren

Tomorrow wants to add colors to the mix
My confidence.
Inspiration.
Imagination.
And
Intuitive new Hope
I am a Perfectionist
I
Move Fast
And
Break Things
Now.
Hear my favorite song
For the first time.
It's the perfect sound.

So.
What's inside your beautiful world?

McKayla Forren's



“a leader to my peers...”

Last year I applied to be a Junior Counselor to get back in the swing of things at High Rocks. I didn't know what to expect from a campground I hadn't visited since my first summer in 2010, people I'd never met, and being on the other side of camp as a leader figure. I decided to keep an open mind and ended up with an irreplaceable summer chock full of unforgettable memories and well learned lessons. I learned to work with my High Rocks sisters to help camp run smoothly, to respect each nook and cranny of my roommates and the greenhouse we lived in. I learned unexpected things from unexpected places and unexpected people.

Deana reminded me what a priceless thing a smile is. Kacie taught me it was okay to take a break from working if I needed to spend time for me. From Courtney, I learned responsibility, a hard lesson when our college papers weren't up to snuff and we arrived late to our jobs. Susan taught me numerous lessons on power struggles, drawing out the beautiful person inside each one of us, and that someone's earliest memory tells a lot about them. I could go on and on and reflect about everything I learned from each person at camp last summer.

I think the biggest lesson I learned as a first time JC was that High Rocks really can make me more confident and willing to accept that I am beautiful and a leader to my peers. In my first year of High Rocks, I saw the older girls and how strong they were; I was told about the leadership journeys they had gone on, but I had always thought it had come naturally to them. Not only did I think that leadership was just for certain people, I was set in my belief that I was a follower. Well not anymore.

My New Beginnings Junior Counselors are still my role models to this day. I will never forget the many words of encouragement that they showered me with over the years. Even now as they sit in their dorm rooms at college, they are a few of my very best friends.

This year I hope to continue learning from everyone around me, for there is much more left for me to learn. I hope to show the New Beginnings girls the magic of High Rocks and be an open ear and an open shoulder for them.

Melsea Hower



“Who I want to be...”

a college admission essay by
Casey Griffith

I am inspired to do good in the world because of the woman who has been teaching me about life since day one. Even at an early age, I could tell my mom was a very strong woman. I've always admired her and wanted to be like her. My favorite story mom has ever told me was from the time she campaigned for Pocahontas County Commissioner when I was not even a year old. It was the very first time she ran for public office and she was determined to win.

Mountainous Pocahontas County is made up of a series of small towns. There's only about 8,400 people strung out across one of the largest counties in West Virginia. I live in the center of the southern part of the county, Marlinton. I doubt it is even big enough to be a town. It's more like a village around a river, if you ask me. But in this village, people aren't shy about telling you what they think of you. If they like you, they'll tell you and if they don't, they'll tell you that too.

While mom was out at the grocery store one day, a lady asked her if she would stop by and put up a sign for her. So the next day on her way home from picking my three year old brother and I up from the baby sitter, she decided to stop by. My mom couldn't just have those simple wire signs; her signs had to have thick wooden stakes in them. It took a sledgehammer just to get them in the ground. She often didn't have time to get them in and with her being a mother to two very small children, it was never long until one of us got upset and started crying. That day it was me that was the first to cry.

She had already started putting the sign in the ground so she couldn't just stop and tend to me. With nothing else she could think of to do, she grabbed me out of my car seat and continued to pound the stake into the ground with a baby on her hip. I don't remember this, but I've heard it so many times and it never gets old. It just makes me want to be as strong as she is and work to make my dreams real.

As the years passed, my respect for my mom grew more and more. The way she went about doing things, like how she accepted criticism, left me in total awe.

My parents' divorce hit me hard. It hit me like a freight train. But I can't even imagine how difficult it was for mom. It'd be like being hit by a freight train on both sides and then being expected to run a marathon. Not only did she lose her supposed life partner, she was suddenly a single mom in a family oriented community. She had two kids to take care of and more than a full time job; she didn't have time to hurt. She had to put on a smile, say everything's okay and keep going.

I only saw tears in her eyes once, when she was telling her nine year old daughter and twelve year old son that their dad wasn't going to live at home anymore. She saw how hurt and confused we were and it must've broken her heart. But even then she didn't let those tears escape her eyes.

It's easy to tell that my mom has had a giant influence on my life. I couldn't thank her enough for all that she's done. She's done the best she could and never stopped trying to do better. She beat the Appalachian woman stereotype. When I look at her, I see who I want to be.

I want to be strong enough to support myself. I want to be able to just say, "Good day to you," when someone says they hate me. If I could inspire just one person like she has me, I'd have lived a good life. I want to help someone, care for them, put all my faith in them, push them over the edge and watch them succeed just like mom has done me. She believes I can do whatever I set my mind to and that alone is enough to push me to do something with myself.

With that being said, I dream of one day changing the world. I want to make a difference in people's lives. I want to make life easier for them, make them happier. But most importantly, I want to make my mom proud of me. That's why I want to go to college. I think college will give me the skills and the opportunities to reach my goals and live my dreams. And that's what I truly want more than anything in this world, to see the same thing while I'm asleep in dreamland as I do when I'm awake and in reality. I wish to see my mom smiling at me saying, "The world's a better place because of you and I couldn't be more proud."

Casey G.





WHERE I'M FROM by Emma Coffman

I'm from Frankford on 219,
From tan sidings, green roof, and big brown
barn door.
From wooden floors and wooden giraffes.

I'm from fingers on the map and
New York and Florida
To West Virginia
From the stories from my dad
Like breaking the ceiling fan
From sayin "what" and "yes sir" to
my family.

I'm from Christmas presents and
Finding eggs for money

From waffles on Sundays and
Homemade ice cream
From fried clams and turkey
On birthdays.

I'm from a construction worker family and
Organization for jobs
From the Beatles to Suzanne
Vega and the 80's music

The special moments that make
My day and wrestling with Dad.
To going to Muskoka and living the life
With my Mom. To jumping on the trampoline
With my brother. This is the place of memories.

Emma Coffman

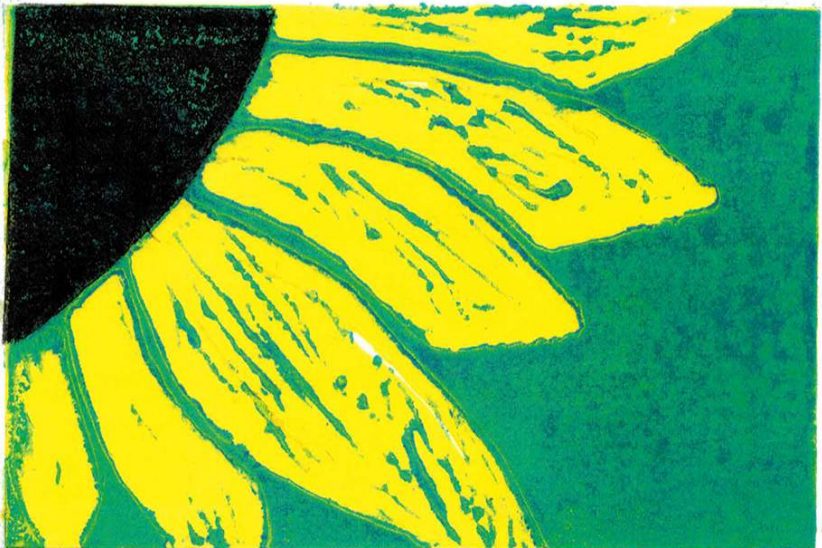


Americus Novalee

by Kelcey Hall

Start Here
New one
Grow young,
Sweet,
Strong.
Plan for a better life.
You're blessed with
rare beauty.
Joy is round
Within toys.
Make a sound
Second to None.
In all its glory.
Be relentless
Love your life cycle.

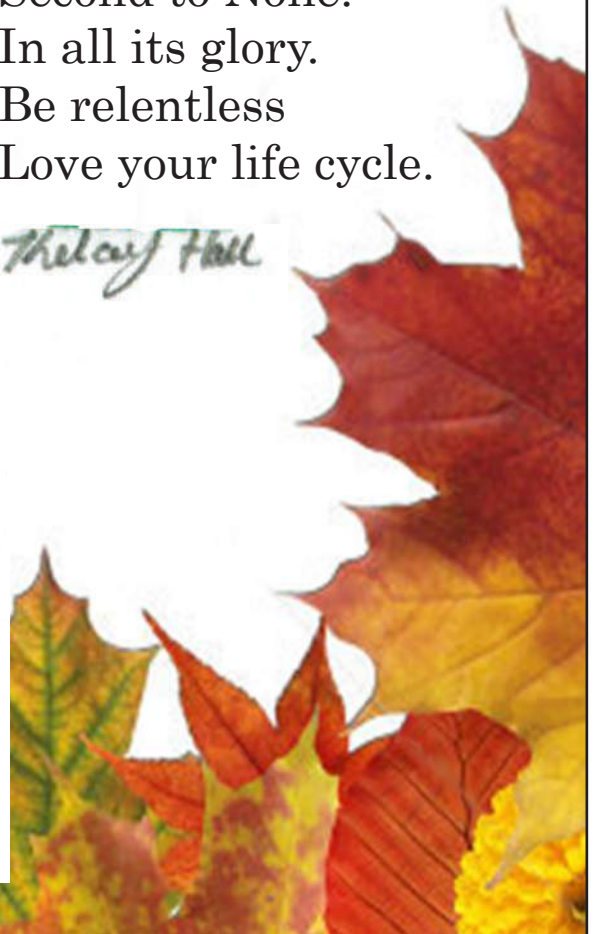
Kelcey Hall



2/5

"Sunflower"

July 2013 Kelcey Hall





From the desk of Renae Anderson

Development Coordinator, High Rocks Alum 2002

High Rocks Academy for Girls is not a program for at-risk girls or a program for girls from troubled families. High Rocks Academy for Girls is a program for gifted young people. Are there at-risk youth who are gifted? YES! Can gifted young people come from troubled homes? YES! Can High Rocks give young people the challenge that they are looking for? YES!

As I settle into my new role at High Rocks, I can't help but think back to the impact that High Rocks has had on my life throughout my years as a High Rocks girl, an AmeriCorps volunteer, an officer on the Alumni Advisory Board and now as the Development Coordinator. In every role I have experienced at High Rocks, no position is less transformational than another. I have gone from a shy eighth grader with a future plan of living with my mother and working as a waitress to a confident college graduate who gets to tell the story of High Rocks every day. High Rocks helped me realize the future that I wanted and then gave me the tools I would need to achieve that future.

High Rocks and Sarah Riley are the reason that I am where I am today. Even after graduating from Pocahontas County High School, High Rocks, Alice Lloyd College and serving two years as an AmeriCorps volunteer, I was convinced that I didn't deserve the opportunity to have an amazing career because of where I came from. The staff at High Rocks showed me that I was wrong; Sarah showed me how to look inside myself and see that I was good enough, that I can do anything.

Today I am the Development Coordinator of High Rocks and more successful than I ever believed I could be. The lesson that I and many others have learned from High Rocks is that when you put the best of yourself into what you are doing, when it comes from your heart and soul and your head, you will be successful every time. Sarah's dream in life is to work herself out of her job; that one day rural Appalachia will not be held back by stereotypes, but will consistently have the resources and support available to be whoever we want to be and realize our dreams of the future. I've known Sarah Riley since I was a fourteen year old girl, receiving free lunch, afraid that the poverty of my present would define my future. She did not give up on me and I know for a fact that she will not give up on her dream until it comes true.

Year after year, girl after girl after girl, High Rocks Academy for Girls is creating new worlds by supporting young women, including me, to make new realities for ourselves. I don't know of anything that is more important than that. I'm so grateful to be on the other side of the coin now, helping to make that magic every day for the girls that are coming after me.

FOUND

By Miranda McMillion

Seek the strong man,
Be the back of war.
A creature,
Dirty and riveting.

-
Death is easy,
Not a mercy.
Men cannot touch us.
You have to give,
Witness the beauty and audacity.
Get closer to the drama.
Move.
Crawl.
Bound.

-
Everyone is a kind of Stone.
Just keep moving.
Keep calm,
It's an outrange

-
Crime and punishment;
Infamous,
Haunting.
Scars and identity,
The first look,
The final word.
-Hopes raging above and beyond
Second chances to think.
Stirring.
Growing.
Working.
See the life you've built,
Take on a life of its own.

*- Miranda
McMillion*



1/3 "Tigress" July 2013



STILL GOING STRONG...

My Lovely Ladies of High Rocks,

I just read the newest newsletter, and I wanted to tell you that I miss you all so much! You have helped so many girls, myself included, shape their lives around who they want to be. This is not a simple thing to do, and I commend each of you for choosing to be part of this journey.

It's not as if you told me how to be happy. You helped me figure it out on my own, and that means a lot to me. Between the alums, the AmeriCorps members, the volunteers, and everyone in between, I have received a lifetime of fabulous advice, the tools to help myself and others, and a home unlike anything else in the world.

I am so eternally grateful for all the love, faith, help, comfort, and guidance the High Rocks has offered me. I hope to, one day, return the favor.

As I continue being a part of the world, I sometimes feel like High Rocks has stopped since I'm not there to participate. This is one of the biggest ways I have ever been wrong – believe me, I've been wrong in some big, bad ways.

Not only have you all influenced me, but you've influenced countless girls before me and the countless girls after me, and there are more where came from. You're still going strong.

Each alum that goes out into the world spreads the High Rocks spirit wherever they go. Before you know it, the entire world will know who we are. We are the mighty, mighty High Rocks; Women of the World.

Love,
Ashia

by Ashia Johnson
High Rocks Alum 2005



Show me the way to go home
 Where I can be the bird
 and watch sparks dance and
 float

When everything gives way
 beneath me
 I will dance with the trees
 Wherever I roam
 And sing, and sing

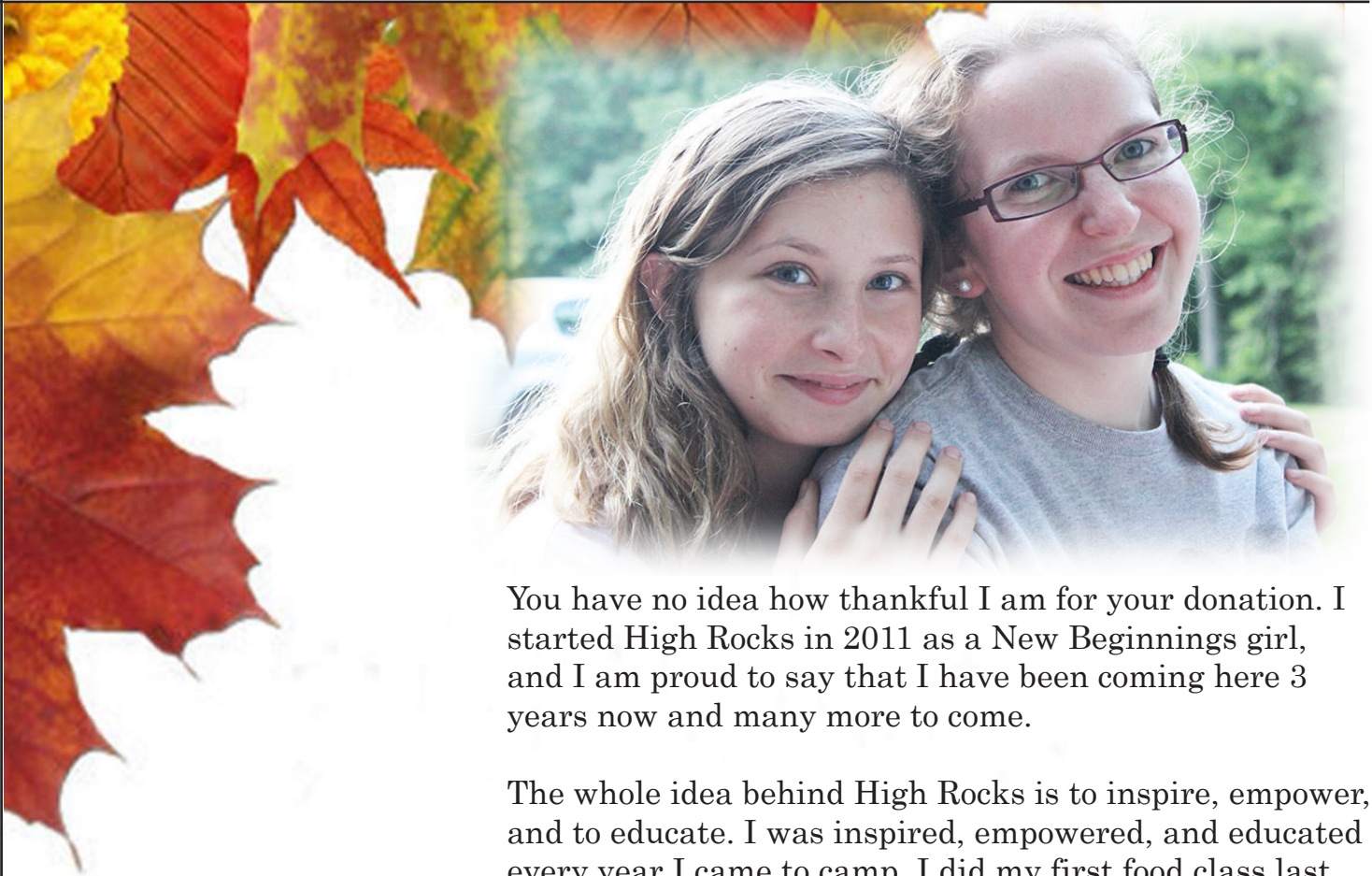
Waiting for the moon to
 come out to hear me

I belong here

But I will fly away on my wings
 And I will keep the flame
 Just show me the way
 to go home.

Brandy Clay





THANK YOU

to our donors,
supporters
and friends...

You have no idea how thankful I am for your donation. I started High Rocks in 2011 as a New Beginnings girl, and I am proud to say that I have been coming here 3 years now and many more to come.

The whole idea behind High Rocks is to inspire, empower, and to educate. I was inspired, empowered, and educated every year I came to camp. I did my first food class last year at Camp Steele and, let me tell you, I didn't even know food politics existed. I can now hold my own in a debate on Monsanto or GMOs, and things like that inspire me to become the intelligent young woman I strive to be.

Even my construction class, which is building a new screenhouse for the campground, has taught me how to do fractions, decimals, and even angles. Math is not my strong suit at all, so you know it's saying something when I'm actually understanding and enjoying math.

Metaphorically speaking, High Rocks is like a bicycle wheel, as a whole we actually work, but without the small spokes, we don't. You are one of those spokes, you help us to keep moving forward, and personally help me develop into the best person I can ever hope and wish to be.

Thank you for your support and for helping me to reach my full potential as a High Rocks girl.

Thank you,
Mikalan Holder