Jennifer Rose Fohl

St. John the Baptist - Harrison

My name is Jennifer Rose Fohl, I was diagnosed with Crohns at age 7 and then, Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis, also known as HLH, at the age of 8. HLH is an often deadly blood disorder affecting all blood components and organs. HLH is usually fatal or requires a bone marrow transplant. My parents, church, family and friends began a prayer chain. When I was on the ventilator, everyone said a litany of prayers and blessed me with holy water from Fatima. There was no change in my condition. My Mom remembered that my Grandma always said that if you need a sign you should pray to St. Theresa. As soon as my Mom finished praying to St. Therese for some sign that I was going to make it, the sliding glass door to the ICU room opened and a lady stepped in, introducing herself as Theresa a new fellow on the case. I started to get better over the next 24 hours and was off the ventilator 48 hours later. Amazingly, I didn't need a bone marrow transplant and after a month in the hospital, I was allowed home but not allowed outside due to being immunosuppressed for the next 6 months. I also have zero natural killer cells, which is your first line of defense in fighting off infections, so I get sick more often than others. A year later, the doctors discovered a new genetic mutation that causes HLH and said this is why I became sick. Unfortunately, they cannot tell me whether I will get sick again with the HLH; because of this, I now have to get blood drawn every week and unfortunately I am a very difficult stick.

I always try to treat others how I would want to be treated and to help others in need. People say I have a smile on my face all the time and I do this hoping this makes others happy and makes them smile.

My family is such a big part of my life. I help take care of my Grandpa and my Uncle (who has cerebral palsy). I help my Uncle by putting his braces on and off his legs so he can get around easier and by doing little things we just take for granted. It keeps me busy but makes me feel good to know I am helping them. My Grandma lived with my family when she had Alzheimer's and we would help to dress, feed and watch her. It was challenging at times because she didn't think she needed any help, but she couldn't do these things by herself. Then, I became sick and everyone tried to help me. My friends made me signs and cards for my room which brightened my day to know people cared about me.

After I recovered, I wanted to do something to help all the people who were on the Bone Marrow Transplant/Cancer unit. So, I decided to take individually wrapped food (it is the only way food can be brought in to the unit), toys for the various ages and other gifts to the unit twice a year. You are isolated and the days seem incredibly long when you can't leave your room. I think of the patients when I buy the gifts hoping it will brighten their day and put a smile on their face.

I keep busy whenever I feel able. Some of the activities I am involved in are: during the summer helping the teachers get ready for the next school year, assisting with set up and tearing down of the scholastic book fair, Program helper for Vacation Bible School, playing volleyball, and performing in drama club. I donate money to the Holy Childhood Association, to underdeveloped villages in Brazil,

Walk for Life, Right to Life, HLH and Crohns. I have received Citizenship Award, and the Americanism Award (given by the local American Legion to a couple children in the Harrison area). It is hard being sick, because a lot of people do not understand what a chronic illness is like. I love school and socializing with my family and friends. I do exceptionally well in school because I enjoy it. I have been a straight A student from first grade on up.

I feel I would benefit from this scholarship, because I always try to do my best and have to work exceptionally hard when I don't feel well. I have been in the hospital in the past year for an abscess from my Crohns, yet, I didn't let that keep me back. I take my education seriously and have a desire and passion to succeed. I have shown I am self motivated and look forward to the new challenges and new friends I will meet at McAuley. I feel like an education is one of the most valuable things in a person's life. I hope you will strongly consider me for this scholarship and am grateful for all you do to help others in need. I feel like I make a difference in others lives because of my past experiences and have a lot of compassion and empathy for others. I want to always help others and hope to make their lives better. Once you have been at Childrens hospital, you realize there are so many children less fortunate then you are and I know I count my blessings for what I have. I am looking forward to attending McAuley High School and plan to become a physician helping others and would like to work on research to find cures for illnesses one day. I would be honored and grateful to receive the Aubrey Rose scholarship. Thank you.