

# Chicken Soup

for

## Friendswood ISD

Gardenia...it was my mother's signature scent. We had a bush growing outside my childhood home in Pasadena, and she loved all things gardenia scented.

My mom passed away two months before my first day as Assistant Principal of Cline Elementary. She was there to see me presented to the Board of Trustees in May 2019 and she left us in June. Beginning a challenging new job on the heels of her surprise departure was bitter-sweet. If only she had been there to call after my first day.

The second day of school, with the hustle and bustle somewhat died down, a little girl walked down the hall and presented me with one single fresh cut gardenia wrapped ever so carefully in a wet napkin and foil. I was so overcome with emotion that I teared up and stood frozen in place. What were the odds?! I asked her name, thanked her, hugged her, and wished her a great day. I was too touched to say much more. Her name was Sophia.

I placed that single bud in a vase on my desk and enjoyed its scent all day. I texted my family to tell them of the irony but they knew it was more than irony. It was my momma hugging me from afar and telling me she was there with me.

The next day, I was able to tell Sophia my story about why this meant so much to me and I called her mother that day, too. Since then, Sophia has given me a hug in the hallway every morning and it is one of the sweetest parts of my day. Sophia will leave our campus next year, but lucky for me, she's training her little sister to carry on this daily tradition!

"Find joy in the little things" is what my mom used to say. A smile...a hug...a random flower on a Thursday... these are all things that can mean so much to someone if we let them. Kindness really does have the power to change the world...one small act at a time.

-Julianne McCarty