

Chicken Soup

for

Friendswood ISD

I'm a firm believer in "to whom much is given, much is required." If you have ever heard that wisdom, you know it means we are to be responsible for what we have and if we have been blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, our stories, and such, it is expected that we will use those to benefit others. I have been blessed many times in my life to see this in action where I was the beneficiary. And, there have been a few standout moments in my career where I heard that small, still voice nudging me to share of myself in one way or another. This is one of those times.

Several years ago, I had a young lady in my U.S. History class who was a great student, and also very quiet. If you know me, then you know that I try to draw the students out of their shells when I can. She always had a sadness about her so one day when we were visiting about a lesson, I asked her if everything was okay. She shared with me that her mother had cancer and it was terminal. Her mother had battled it courageously for a few years, but none of the treatments had worked. Immediately (and even though I didn't want it to happen), my eyes filled with tears. I apologized for the emotion, but I could so relate to her. You see, my mother died from cancer when I was 17 years old -- a junior in high school, and this sweet girl was only 14 years old and in the 8th grade. I was so heartbroken for her. We made arrangements for her to have lunch with me in my room the next day so we could visit freely.

From that day forward, it seemed as though a small weight had been lifted from her. She began to interact with the other students in class more and her heart was a little lighter at least while she was in school. I did not do or say anything magical. I just shared my story with her and in her words -- "it was nice to know someone could understand what [she] was going through." The weight of the sorrow was a lot for her, and it was almost as if she gave herself permission to be a kid again, even if for just a few hours each day.

I know there are many who do not think educators should share anything personal with students. I disagree. Clearly, not everything is shareable, but when we have something of value or benefit to someone else -- especially a young person, I think it is important for us to share a bit of ourselves given the opportunity. You never know how you might touch someone's life.

I ran into this young lady in the grocery store about two years ago. She was just about to graduate from college. We visited briefly and she told me about all the great things that had been going on in her life. Before we parted ways, she thanked me for being there for her in junior high and told me that I'd never know what it meant to her. Little did she realize, I knew exactly what it meant. Someone had been the light in my darkness once upon a time, too.

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