

May 13, 2009

Dear Mrs. Nalley and the Ladies of Sugarmill Woods,

It was great talking with you tonight and I would like to give the ladies an update. In the spring of 1998 the wonderful ladies of Sugarmill Woods awarded me with a scholarship to attend Central Florida Community College. I continued to be awarded scholarships from the ladies in future years. I graduated from CFCC and later married Jeremiah Hayes in 2002. I continued to attend college in Tampa. I graduated in 2005 from the University of South Florida. I taught in Wesley Chapel, Florida for one year before moving Ashburn, Virginia (30 minutes west of Washington D.C.) (We moved to DC for my husbands' job)

In high school, I felt very blessed to receive such an award at the time and I didn't know back then how much it would affect me now, eleven years later. As I take a minute and think back to when times were tough and money was scarce I can't help but think of the people who supported me and how I got to be where I am today.

I currently teach 2nd grade at Mill Run Elementary School in Ashburn, Virginia. I have been teaching for 4 years and I absolutely love it! I am excited every day to go to work and see my students. Who can honestly say they love getting out of bed to go to work each morning? I love my students and I love what I do! I have been married for 7 years and we have 2 small dogs (Yorkie named Mattie and a Dachshund named Winston). My husband and I just bought our first home last year and I feel very blessed. I started George Mason University last summer and within the year I will have my masters in education.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone one of you ladies for your hard work and dedication throughout the year saving up the scholarship money to be awarded to the lucky students who are bound for college. College days are and were not easy, but having the funds available definitely takes some of the pressure off of the student. Coming from a single parent home and in very much need of assistance I can not explain the importance of scholarships for those seeking a college degree. I was chosen for an award because someone believed in me and knew I could go all the way, even on the days I didn't think I could finish college. I knew that there were ladies back home who were cheering me on.

Over a decade later I am still so very grateful for all the support that was given to me and my education, please don't ever give up helping those who are college bound. I started at CFCC and made my way to a master's degree with the help of you! You made a difference in my life; I would not be where I am today and doing what I love to do without your faith in me. To all the ladies of Sugarmill Woods, THANK YOU!

*With much respect,
Kelli Hayes (Harrod)*