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Think of a rose. At first glance it seems so beautiful and interesting. When you look underneath the rose you will find many thorns. You don't know how they got there but you know that without them the rose would not be what it is today. Much like a rose, life is full of various thorns, challenging each individual in order to achieve growth. It's not how those challenges affect you; it's how you respond to those challenges. All of the people and experiences presented in your life have an effect on the growth of you as an individual. As you grow older you watch those people face challenges. Their strength and confidence through these obstacles is what can inspire you. We see these people throughout our lives, whether it be a teacher, a parent or even a Rose Festival Princess. Inspiration can be found where you least expect it.

During my four years of high school I have been through multiple experiences that have shaped me as an individual. During my sophomore year I took a preschool course where we had to design lesson plans that were educational and fun for the kids. We were the role models and leaders for these young children. By the end of the year I realized that it was really these kids who were the leaders. We would make lesson plans and observe their performances, allowing them to teach us how and what they wanted to learn. When I was a Junior I decided to be a student leader at Outdoor School. Being a student leader was another experience that has shaped me. I was challenged to teach and inspire 6<sup>th</sup> graders and help them grow; unexpectedly I grew too. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I could learn something from someone half my age. During that one week, the students opened my eyes and made me realize that no matter how old, what size or how you look, you can inspire someone.

There are also those challenges that force us to be strong and believe in ourselves. My grandpa passing away recently was a sharp thorn in my life. When my dad went to collect his things he found a letter that my grandpa had written. In that letter, my grandpa said; "I want to

let you know how proud I am of who you are and how you love and take care of your family. Last but not least, I want you to know how proud and lucky I am to have you as my son.” Unfortunately, my grandpa never sent the letter but after my dad showed the letter to me I realized how powerful inspiration and being a role model can be.

The next time you hold a rose, don’t let the thorns scare you away from the true beauty of the flower. Much like in life, facing challenges can be the best opportunity for growth. I have taken on all of life’s obstacles so far and have come out of each one stronger and more confident. I have learned that I can do anything that I set my mind to, no matter what kinds of challenges life throws at me. I am now ready for my next greatest challenge; representing Wilson High School as your 2011 Rose Festival Princess. I look forward to motivating, inspiring and learning from this exciting experience.