



# ALLEGHENY VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

300 PEARL AVENUE  
CHESWICK, PENNSYLVANIA 15024  
www.avsdweb.org

To the Selection Committee:

It is my privilege to recommend Marina McCutcheon. I can't think of another student who's made a stronger impression on me during my 30-year teaching career. What makes her stand out from the crowd? Her #2 class rank is a testament to her intelligence, but I've worked with many, many bright students.

When I think of Marina the qualities that jump to mind are less tangible than a grade point average. Adjectives like hard-working, dedicated, and selfless are thrown around so freely that they tend to lose their value. But let me stress that Marina is all of those things. She is hard-working and dedicated. How else would you describe a girl who, despite suffering from debilitating headaches, has put in more time doing schoolwork than any of her classmates? She is selfless. How else would you describe a girl who has put in 900 hours of volunteer work?

Let's talk about some of Marina's accomplishments. During her time at SHS she's continuously challenged herself with a rigorous academic workload that includes numerous AP classes. But there's more to school than what goes on in the classroom. Marina is a standout athlete in both soccer and track. She's also active in many clubs and activities. I would like to point out two in particular because of her leadership roles. She's the President of The Future is Mine and, for the second year in a row, she's the Vice-President of the Student Council.

Now to the truly exceptional part of Marina's resume. There's more to life than what goes on at school. Her volunteerism is astonishing. She's been one of the pillars of the highly successful local chapter of Fun and Freedom, a Christian, non-profit organization. In addition she created the Freedom from Malaria foundation that provided essential health supplies to over 300 people in Africa.

I want to finish with a personal story about what she's meant to me. Last year I returned to the classroom after eight years as the school librarian. Needless to say, my teaching skills were a bit rusty. Marina was able to help find many mistakes as I stumbled through the first few weeks of the school year.

After some soul-searching I decided to step up my game. And the funniest thing happened. I started to enjoy teaching again, in a way I hadn't in a long, long time. I was reminded of why I became a teacher in the first place. It was to help young people like Marina. In the end, I can only hope that I helped her as much as she helped me.

Marina has excelled in academics, athletics, and extra-curricular activities. She is an outstanding student, but more importantly, she is an outstanding person. I give her my absolute highest recommendation. Hard work, dedication, and selflessness aside, it's her wonderful personality that truly sets Marina McCutcheon apart from the crowd.

Kenneth W. Miller  
Physics Teacher  
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