

Hello there! I'm Maryn Seaman and I'm a senior at Taylorsville High School. I'm so honored to receive this award and am grateful for the nomination.

I'm sure you've heard of challenges where you write one thing you're grateful for daily, for a month, and see what changes in your life because of it. During the fall of my junior year, an idea sparked to create a gratitude challenge different than any I was aware of. Rather than writing something down in my journal, I wanted to choose a different person in my life each day to reach out to and show my gratitude for them. I know that it's easy to feel like no one recognizes your efforts or cares about you, especially with many people dealing with so many different struggles. All I knew was I didn't want people I'm close to to ever feel forgotten or like they didn't matter. I'm a strong believer that a simple act of gratitude can go a long way. Individually reaching out to someone and personally thanking them for specific things they have done for me, lessons they've taught me, and how they've positively influenced my life was something I was really excited to do.

With November coming up, I created the "Show You Care" challenge where each day had a specific prompt such as a cousin, coworker, someone you sit next to often, a neighbor, someone you haven't talked to in a while, and many more. I didn't just want to stop at the people in my own life, but I wanted to extend the challenge and give others the opportunity to thank people who have been part of their lives. I shared the challenge with friends and family, my school and community, and asked them to pass it along. I was ecstatic about starting this challenge, getting everything organized and put together, and sharing it with others. I was overjoyed seeing friends and family flood social media by reposting the challenge and highlighting specific people from their lives.

Throughout the month of November and even afterwards, I received A LOT of positive feedback from people participating with me. One friend of mine shared how it was really nice to reach out to one of her childhood friends from elementary who she hadn't seen in a while and being able to catch up was meaningful to her, and something she wouldn't have thought of doing on her own. A lady from my neighborhood shared how she had sent thanks to one of her coworkers and they responded with great emotion and told her that was just what they needed to hear. I was really happy to hear of so much positive feedback and see others participating in my challenge all around my community.

Now, if you're thinking, "What can I do to be a force for good in my community?" I would say it starts by identifying a simple need. For me, knowing that so many people at my school struggle with feelings of sadness, loneliness, and hopelessness, I wanted to do anything I could to let them know they are cared about and belong. Apart from school, I thought there are probably others in my own life that I could reach out to and let them know I care. Once you have found a simple need, come up with a simple plan. Let's be real, how many texts do you send a day? Is it THAT hard to send just one more thanking someone who has had an influence on you? Making it easy for people to participate will increase the number of people who will want to join you. The next step is to share it with others around you. By encouraging people in your community to join you in making a change, you too can be a force for good.