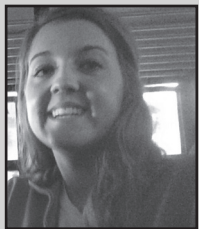


# Answering big question worth the wait

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The squeaky irritation of the next four years haunts my ears: “Samantha DeShields?”

My name as a question.

The airtingles my toes as they rest upon the unscuffed soles of my sandals. Feels just like middle school: still Antarctica, still the unreasonable desks that succeed at making me uncomfortable, still the constant boredom.

My whisper emerges, “Here.” I look around while some new faces stare at the lady with the questions falling out of her mouth “Sarah...Fred.... Tommy...?” I sit. I stare. I listen.

When I sat in those desks, I thought that the teachers calling my name for roll were just fulfilling an average act of responsibility. Now I know that they were asking the question every high school student should answer with more than just a “here.” Samantha DeShields? Who is she? What does she want in life? What is she going to do to get there? To get where?

Every student faces struggles, whether they be not having the right shoes for an outfit or having an alcoholic parent. Every little problem that we face, no matter the severity of it, still forms us into who we are going to be.

It’s how we react that’s important, what we do to fix these problems and move forward. Yes, it would have been amazing to wear the perfect shoes for that date or to win that tennis match or not to have family pass away or not to have my car break down; however, I can honestly say that I am very glad that my car broke down, that my family had malfunctions, that I lost that tennis match, that my shoes were not great with the shirt I wore to school that day. Those events made me who I am. I could say none of that matters, but that wouldn’t be true.

Wearing those ugly shoes made me realize that I wanted new ones; my car’s breaking down made me save up the money to get it fixed; my dysfunctional family made me determined to get away. These problems morphed into inspiration and possibility. They answered the question I heard every day in school: “Samantha DeShields?”

A woman who smiles, who is happy, who has a career goal, who is going to get there by support and intense determination, who is a daughter, who is a sister, who is friend, who is a speaker, who is a listener, who is a learner, who is a teacher, who is a worshiper, who is a believer. She is Samantha DeShields.

The irritating green cap rests upon my hair. The line of graduates recedes as the stage approaches. The unfamiliar faces fill the gym. The knots twist my stomach. The voice behind the podium states my name: Samantha DeShields.

This time I walk to who I am.