

My time at Harbor View can be compared to a tree. Each branch represents a new year at Harbor View. Each leaf represents a memory that contains a lesson learned. The tree trunk can be seen as myself. As I grew I accumulated more branches and leaves. My roots have stretched deeper into the soil to ground myself for the great obstacles that middle school and high school would bring. Thanks to my time at Harbor View, these challenges that could be seen as a type of storm, did not knock me over. I am now going to share some of my favorite branches and leaves.

The first comes from my first day of kindergarten. I remember nervously sitting on the edge of my mom's bathtub as I watched her get ready to take me to school. I remember continuously asking her if she thought I would make any friends. She reassured me and insisted that it would be a great first day. I then remember timidly walking out to the playground during the very first recess. I entered a playhouse and found two girls sitting in there. I quickly asked them, "do you wanna be friends?" They both smiled and nodded. Of course making friends isn't always this simple, but from this moment I knew that I would never be alone.

Next we move on to my first grade year with Mrs. Carpenter. Here I learned how to come out of my shell and be confident. Just about everyday I would ask Mrs. Carpenter if I could do my own show and tell. Mrs. Carpenter would always allow me to have this time during class. She was definitely more interested in what I had to say than the rest of the class, but it was still an opportunity to show my extroverted side.

Skipping forward to fourth grade, Mrs. Botta taught me how to be a more empathetic person. When the "ocean breeze" was the only air conditioning Harbor View had, classrooms would often overheat. Both Mrs. Botta and I didn't do so well in this heat. She noticed that I was having a hard time right away and she would always bring a spray bottle to school to cool us down and she would look out for me. I have always wanted to be just like her in this sense.

In fifth grade Ms. Leech and Mrs. Wells taught me the importance of organization and independence. I learned how to be a more responsible and self-sufficient student during these last two years at Harbor View. With these branches and leaves along with many others I would be just about prepared for my life to come.

Perhaps the most important thing that Harbor View gave me was a community. I have not been a tree standing alone, rather, I have been amongst many others. Harbor View provided me with several life long friends. "You've gotta friend in me," said Payton Chester. Although she is no longer here with us, this quote truly describes the Harbor View community. We all have each others' backs. Payton Chester and her family always had my back. Payton attended Harbor View until fifth grade. I had met the Chester family in kindergarten as I became best friends with Hayden and Riley. Ever since then our families have been practically glued together. On January 26, 2020 Payton and Mrs. Chester passed away in an accident that took several lives. This day was absolutely the worst day of my life thus far. However, this major obstacle did not blow my tree down. I had the lessons from Harbor View grounding me and the Harbor View community came together stronger than ever for me and my family. All of my old classmates, teachers, and even the principal had our backs. This support kept me stable. My junior year at CdM high school I decided to dedicate my season to Payton and Mrs. Chester. With their initials

embroidered on the sleeve of my jersey I quite literally wore my heart on my sleeve. I channeled all of the lessons that Harbor View gave me into each and every practice and game. I trusted that I was never alone while I had my teammates with me, I had the confidence to put myself out there and be the best I could be on the field, I treated everyone with kindness and empathy, and sometimes I saw that I had to take matters into my own hands to come out with a win. I also couldn't have even had the strength to dedicate that season if it weren't for all of the people that I knew I had in my corner. We ended up winning the championship game of that season. It wouldn't have been possible without my Harbor View tree and the community that came with it. This is also just one of the many examples of my CdM high school and middle school successes that was made possible by the values and lessons Harbor View taught me.