

Odyssey

By: Gracie Teeple

I pushed open the door that led into Libby Center on the first day of fifth grade. Walking through the crowd and silently climbing the staircase up toward my new classroom, I watched the older kids below walk sure-footedly down the wide hallways, calling out greetings to their friends and classmates, whom they had spent the last three months apart from. Approaching the top of the stairs, I took a deep breath and opened the door to room 205. The aroma of freshly sharpened pencils mixed with that of warm printer paper wafted over me as I peeked inside, and I got my first glimpse of the people I would soon learn to call my family, in the building with which I would shortly associate some of the best times of my life.

As I near the end of my Odyssey experience, I find myself returning more and more frequently to this special memory. I often wonder why I, out of so many others, was chosen to walk down the locker-lined hallways of the Libby Center, to run on the green field outside, and to be a part of such an amazing program. Each and every day, I think about how extremely fortunate I am to have been able to attend Odyssey throughout the past four years of my life, building memories and friendships with those around me. Reflecting upon my time at Libby, my appreciation for those who have made it such a fantastic journey grows larger than I could have ever imagined.

Odyssey has allowed me to nourish my passion for learning and encouraged me to develop the valuable critical thinking skills that are so highly regarded in this generation. I can remember when I was in fourth grade, before I came to Odyssey; I was never challenged enough in the classroom. School had become a monotonous, dull place for me, and I found myself constantly bored, with few ways to exercise my mind. When I walked through the doors of the Libby center for the first time, I knew that was all about to change. Odyssey made me excited about learning again, and brought color and excitement back into the school atmosphere. Not only did it challenge me, but it was a place where I could go to learn, play, and be myself – a place where I felt safe and comfortable in my own skin.

When I am at Odyssey, I am surrounded by a wonderful staff of caring and compassionate teachers, mentors, and advisors who help guide me when I am lost, and who

selflessly offer their unwavering attention and time to assist me in my many endeavors. I will be eternally grateful for all that they do for me both in and outside of school. Along with Libby's incredible faculty, being able to work with all of my great peers is an invaluable part of my time there. The diversity and uniqueness of the students at Odyssey is an incredible thing. It has not only taught me about tolerance and empathy, but has opened my mind to the multiple views and opinions which accompany such a varied group, and which are prevalent in our world today. During my time at Odyssey, I have created strong bonds of friendship with my fellow classmates. We have worked together, laughed together, and quarreled with one another, as any family might do. Yet, despite our differences, we have been able to unite and connect as one unit. As each year has come and gone, we have grown closer to one-another, reinforcing our companionship and fortifying our friendships so that they may endure even when we must part ways.

Providing me with these priceless friendships is only one example of how Odyssey has prepared me for high school and the future. By being challenged to do my best in whatever I am taking part in, and pushed to persevere when times are hard, I have been able to establish solid, reliable study habits that will carry me throughout life. The skills that I have been taught at Odyssey have readied me for what lies ahead and gives me confidence in beginning the next chapter of my life.

To many, the red brick walls of the Libby Center may simply be just another building. But to me, that building is my home away from home, a place where I have learned, grown, and flourished into the person that I am today. Those red brick walls will always be significant in my life, wherever it may take me, and the people inside will forever be my heroes.