

Looking back at my REACH experience, there is nothing but positivity. The REACH family will always have a special place in my heart. REACH provided me with a safe place in school when home wasn't. When I entered REACH it was my last resort, I knew I needed help but I didn't know exactly what kind of help I needed. I entered REACH the third trimester of my Freshmen year. Within days of being enrolled in REACH, I was seeing improvements in myself. For the first time in years, I felt like someone believed and cared about me. REACH gave me hope when I was in the darkest part of my life.

REACH is a second family to me. The staff and students in REACH held me accountable not only for my academics but for my actions and goals. They supported me, and gave me a safe place to express all the emotions and thoughts I was feeling. They didn't judge me, or make me feel like I was being judged. They helped me work through what I was feeling and taught me the coping skills, so that I could better my mental health, and overall situation. They gave me skills that I use every day in my life.

The REACH staff pushed me to be the best person I can be in all aspects of my life. They pushed and supported me when I decided to take classes at Ridgewater Community College for college and high school credit. They provided me with academic resources and helped me as much as possible with classes, they also taught me how to be proactive in my education. They helped me gain the confidence to talk to my teachers/professors when I needed help in a class or wasn't understanding something. This skill has been tremendously helpful in my two years at the University of North Dakota. I have and am building connections with my professors because REACH taught me to reach out to teachers when I needed help, they helped me build my confidence in myself.

Being a recipient of the REACH Gives Scholarship is an incredible honor, knowing that the staff truly believed in me was insanely motivating. Before joining REACH I had given up on the idea of going to college. I never thought I would be good enough. Because of the support I got from the REACH staff over the years, I was able to graduate High School with 33 college credits and enter college as a Sophomore. The REACH scholarship allowed me to be able to go to my Top pick for colleges, and apply for the program I wanted. REACH also indirectly helped me find my major/passion. Reach looks at "troubled" kids and asks the question "why?" instead of dismissing them. They dig into why a child is acting out and why they aren't performing well in school, and they help solve the problems at home or help teach coping methods to kids and in turn the kid's behavior changes. This led me to the Public Health Education field with a communications minor. Being a recipient of the REACH scholarship is a constant reminder of the people who supported me through the darkest times of my life, and gives me motivation when college gets hard or when I start to struggle. It's a reminder that I have people have my back and genuinely care about me and my well-being.

REACH changed my entire life's course. Without REACH I wouldn't be in college, I wouldn't have graduated high school, nor would I have been thriving. I would have been stuck in the cycle of abuse and substance abuse. I would still be using unhealthy damaging coping methods, to deal with my situation. I would be scared, and unconfident in myself and in others. I would be isolating myself away from everyone. The REACH family has genuinely saved my life.

Bri W.