

## Full Circle by Daly Dodsworth

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My name is Daly Dodsworth, and I am thirteen years old. Three and a half years ago, I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, an incurable disease caused by the failure of the pancreas by the immune system.

Upon being diagnosed, I was in the hospital for three days. I was scared and away from my friends and siblings. My parents alternated spending time with me. As you would expect, I watched TV for the duration of my stay, which can be boring. However, when I look back on the days that I was in the hospital, I don't think of the times I know that I cried, or the pain from IVs and shots. I think about the things that brightened my day, one of them being therapy dogs visiting my room.

One particular dog came into my room on the second day of my hospital stay, which is the one I remember most, a rough coated collie named Sophie. This dog was one in a million. She was gentle, and like a human, picked up on my social cues. Of course, I wasn't afraid of dogs, but I wasn't in a great mood either. It brightened my mood immensely and made my day.

As I grew older I graduated from elementary to middle school. Towards the end of sixth grade, we prepared for a special presentation. Ted Slupik, author of *Sophie, Best Friends Are Forever*, talked to us about writing his book and the power of volunteering. He explained how he had trained Sophie to make hospital visits. I immediately recognized Ted as the man with the collie who visited me. Although Sophie had passed, Ted was there with his new dog, Rosebud, who is continuing Sophie's kind work.

At the end of his presentation, Ted offered any student the opportunity to see Rosebud work at a nursing home. After his presentation, I made sure to tell him I remembered Sophie and him, which made me want to see Rosebud in action.

My friends, Natalie, Blanca, and I set a time with him and were anxious to have the opportunity become a reality. The day arrived, and we pulled up to the nursing home. As we reunited with the Slupiks and Rosebud, I knew I was ready to go inside and be a part of the visits.



Rosebud and her pal, Daly



As we walked in, the faces in the lobby lit up, just like mine had when I had been the one receiving the visit. We walked the halls with Rosebud, getting the opportunity to meet many new faces, all with new personalities. One unforgettable visit was the one with Wally, a World War II veteran. I had recently learned about World War II making it easy to ask questions about his experiences. Natalie, Blanca and I chatted and asked questions to get to know the hero. As we talked, I could see the expression on his face soften and his mood lighten. We ended our visit by

asking if we could take a picture with Wally, and he gladly accepted. We did not know that Wally had not seen any faces as young as ours in a long time.

Sadly, Wally passed away only days after our visit, but it was told to us that he kept repeating the fact he loved our visit, one of his last happy memories. Hearing this as a thirteen year old and knowing that I made someone feel so good felt more than amazing. I don't have enough time in the world to explain each patient that we met, or more importantly, how each of them personally touched my heart.

After the visit to the nursing home I got to thinking. Ted gets to feel this feeling every week, and I felt it only a couple times, changing me for the better. I wondered if his hospital visit with me three years ago made him feel the same way I had when I was able to visit these patients.

Just a short year later, Ted returned to our school. He asked the girls and me to help him present to the sixth graders. Again, the feeling I had felt when at the nursing home returned. Ted let us in on a secret he had used to remember who of the girls was who. He called us the "BDN Girls," using the first initial of our names. B, for Blanca, meant bold. D, for Daly, meant dynamic. Finally, N, for Natalie, meant nice.



The BDN Girls shown as Natalie, Blanca, Daly

This may seem like a little thing to you, but to us it was everything. It meant that he had remembered our visit. Also, that our visit had meant as much to him as it did to us.

Isn't it amazing how the world spins in circles? How when something is done for you, you want to return the favor? My story with Sophie, Rosebud, the Slupik's, Natalie, and Blanca, ended up going in a circle. This showed me how one action, one thought, or one feeling can be spread or returned. Helping others is so rewarding. Volunteer! And, have fun with it!

*Daly is a student at Madison Junior High in Naperville District 203. She is an active teen who loves playing sports and hanging with friends. She also enjoys opportunities to volunteer and continues to seek ways to help others. Her future plans include going into the medical field, perhaps to become a surgeon.*