

Payton Dampf, First Grade

My father is the best. My dad helps me when I'm hurt. He plays with me a lot. He makes breakfast for my family. He lets me have friends over. My dad helps me ride my bike.

When he gets home, we turn on a movie and cuddle. We cuddle with each other a lot.

He plays soccer with me. He helps me do my math. He helps me read. He reads the Bible to me.

My dad was the second person who held me when I was just born. My dad is in the Air Force and he saves our country. My dad is a very good dad.

Thank you, Dad, for being my hero and my dad. I love you.

Anthony Pizano, Second Grade

My grandpa is a good man. He always helps people when they need help. He always teaches me how to fix things when they are broken. He taught me how to fish and hunt deer to provide food for our family.

My grandpa says to always do my best, that it's okay to make mistakes and to be brave no matter what happens, and that it's okay to cry.

My grandpa helps me do my homework. When I don't understand things and if he doesn't know, he tries to figure it out with me.

I like to take walks with him in the woods and talk to him, he knows a lot about things.

My grandpa means everything in the world to me. He is one of a kind. He's always there when I need him.

Aubrie Boehler, Third Grade

My dad means everything to me! He's the best dad in the whole world. He takes care of me, he makes me laugh and he is also a cancer fighter.

I know my dad loves me because when I'm sick with a fever or the flu, he tries everything to make me feel better. At night when he tucks me into bed, he'll read my favorite book called *Peaches the Pig*. My favorite part is the sound effects he makes for the animals in the story. **NOW I LOVE BEDTIME!**

My dad also makes me laugh! Like the time my dad put on my mom's Batgirl costume and chased us around the house! Or, the times he picks up "Piggy," my first stuffed pig, and makes her fly! Before I know it, Piggy's in my face! Because of him, every day is full of laughter.

My daddy stands out in my family because he is a cancer fighter. So whenever he goes to the doctor, I'm cheering him on wherever I am! I have hope for him.

Every memory with my dad means 100% for me. Every *Father Daughter Dance*, every fun or serious moment and our special time together, when I see my dad, I want to yell, "I love you very much!"

I have the best dad in the world because he takes good care of me. He loves to make me laugh. Most of all, he's a good fighter. Someday he will be free from cancer.

John Kurgan, 4th Grade

It Takes a Team

It is just me and my mom at home. She always says it takes a village to raise me. Everyone has to pitch in a tiny bit to move things along.

I'm a soccer guy and I think that it's similar to how it takes a whole soccer team to get to a goal. The goalie keeps the other team from scoring, defenders help keep the ball on the offensive side, midfielders create the opportunities to score and forwards finish.

My team is made up of teachers, coaches, friends and family that have filled in when my dad wasn't there. But, when I think about my village, one person stands out, my Grandpa.

My Grandpa has always believed in me. Even as a baby, he gave me a very special Chinese name, Ming Fong, which means highest peak. My Grandpa has encouraged me to reach higher goals, than even I believed I couldn't reach. I have been successful in school, sports and life because of his support.

He taught me that dads should contribute equally in a household. He helps my Grandma with all kinds of things. He does things like mopping the floor, doing the laundry and cooking meals. (He makes the best roast EVER!) Our family loves to eat. Grandpa has family dinners at least once a week. It is not just about eating together. It is about connecting with the ones you love and most. Because of this, my cousins are like brothers to me and my aunts are 2nd mothers.

I think it would be great if my Grandpa would retire so that we could travel to all kinds of exotic places over the world. That would be totally cool.

Madeline Marie King, 5th Grade

My dad is one of the best dads to roam this earth. I know a lot of people would say, "No! My dad is the best!" But, I can prove my dad is the best. I love him to the moon and back.

My dad is an accountant, so he knows loads about mathematics. He always checks my math homework and helps me on perplexing questions. I Love (with a capital "L") being on my school's math team. Daddy always teaches me new concepts and is at every one of my competitions. When I get a question right, he beams and we fist bump enthusiastically.

Dad has the best smile I've ever seen. It's pearly white and always sincere. It appears often, which makes me smile back. The best part about when Dad smiles, is that, his eyes dance along with it.

My all-time second favorite part of my dad is his laughing side. He can take any joke and fires jokes out like nobody's business. When I want the world to disintegrate, Dad makes me laugh. His laugh is fantastic. You know he is laughing hard when his face turns red, shoulders hunch, eyes turn to slits and a raspy, donkey sound comes out of his mouth.

My all-time first favorite part of my dad is when he tells stories. He has had the craziest incidents as a kid, like when his dad's van rolled down the hill. Though, the best stories are the ones he makes up. They make you wheeze from laughter. Some sort of glop always dumps on a character with a funny name. It is amazing how he can whip up a story within a minute.

As you can see, my dad is the greatest. He comes to all of my events and cares about me so much. Even with his crazy work schedule, he still carves out time for me. I couldn't ask for a better dad.

Alivia Cummings, 6th Grade

Every day, I anxiously wait for my father to walk into our house. I never really tell him what he means to me, because he already knows. My father is a courageous person, a person who is never too tired to play. He goes to work almost every day with a smile on his face. Wow, hardworking, but he means more to me.

What my father means to me is solid metal, you can't bring down. He is a shield that's always there to help. My dad is the leader of the pack and the person who keeps me on track. My dad is someone I can trust and leads me down the right path. He opens my eyes to new things. I am convinced, there is no better dad.

Dalton Renick, 7th Grade

My dad is my real hero because he is one of the most special people in my life. My dad has taught me many things in life. He has been my baseball and football coach since I can remember, and has always been there for me, not just to learn about winning and losing, but what the sports are really about. He is not just great with me but a really great coach to all the kids. He believes that every kid has something special and wants them all to succeed. I also learned from a very young age that you're just not given a spot on a team because your dad is a coach. You have to work hard in life to get it and that the best person for that position does not always mean that they are a better player. They just may be better for that spot and that there is a spot for everyone's strengths.

I have learned many things from my father from sports, many life lessons and many happy and sad emotions, but it's more than that. He has also shown me, by example, how to be a good man, friend, husband and father.

He is one of the most kind, loving and generous men I know. There is not one thing he would not do for our family, but also anyone else that may need a helping hand. He has shown me what it is to be a hard worker and that you have to work to pay your bills and have nice things. That it's just not handed out. We may not have all the money in the world, or have some huge fancy house, but we do have a home. My dad works hard to provide and make sure we always have the things we need and want. He has always made sure that our family is well taken care of.

My father is a man that I admire and respect and he has made a huge impact on the kind of person I want to be. He has influenced my life by teaching me the lessons of good and bad behaviors and how to react to situations that I may or may not like. He has shown me how to be a man when I grow up and how I should treat others. He has shown me that it's important to be honest and true and to not tell a lie to others. He has told me that no good ever comes from a lie and facing the truth may be hard, but that a real man will always do the right things.

My dad is truly a great man to me, my brother and my mom but also to everyone he meets. I can't imagine not having him in my life, someone to look up to and call my hero.

Alyssa Richardson, 8th Grade

My father is coffee in the morning, a scruffy beard and work boots. He is the early bird of the family, the organized one. He keeps me in check. He is good with his hands and is always fixing or mending something.

When I think of my dad, I see him carrying a worn down Bible, his deep laugh, and the smell of his favorite Polo cologne. He's not just these things, though.

He is a protector, a giver, and a teacher. I remember him teaching me to drive the four-wheeler as a little girl, and now more recently, a car. I remember days spent out on the lake when the sun was shining. We never caught any fish, but it was fun just the same.

I know he would do anything for me. Road trips were taken just because I wanted to. He never spoiled me, but I was given everything I could ever need.

It would be a lie to say he's perfect and never does wrong. Mistakes are made, but when I look at the big picture, I know I'm lucky to say I have him as a father.

I can't imagine my life without him. Memories with him fill my mind and I know there will be many more to come. I'll always think of my father as my one true role model.

Abigail Ervin, 9th Grade

Endearing. Caring. Family bound. Reliable. Adventurous. Handsome. These are all traits that any woman would be lucky to find in a man. These are things we look for when searching for our “perfect husband.” These are also the traits that perfectly portray Jeremy Jason Ervin, my dad.

I’ve come to the realization that having a dad can be such a rare thing, but having a dad like mine is something that only a handful of the world’s population gets to experience.

My dad is the kind of guy to take you to a Father Daughter Dance on Saturday night and a baseball game Sunday afternoon. Most importantly, though, he’s the person you want to experience every minute of your life with.

Ever since I learned to write, I’ve been writing short stories about my dad and how much I love him;

“My dad because he listens to how my day is being.” – 1st grade, to

“I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have my dad by my side.”

– 8th grade.

Choir concerts, school plays, movie and dinner dates, amusement parks, car shows, and long talks on long car rides. This is my dad. This is the guy who held me in his arms before anyone else. This is the most important man to have ever stepped foot into my life.

Lydia Klimt, 10th Grade

When I am asked what my father means to me, I think of more than all the soccer games he watched, practices he drove to and learning to ride my bike in our cul-de-sac. What I do think of is all the little things that make my dad different from the other game-watching, practice-driving dads who also taught their kids to ride bikes when they were six.

While most dads take their kids on a bike ride around a park nearby, my dad took us on a bike ride - that was supposed to be 7 miles with breakfast at the end, which became a nice 23 mile ride with a breakfast that was not worth it.

My friends came back from summer break with tales of their adventures at Disneyland. I returned with stories that I found equally, if not more, thrilling of spending the week on my grandparents property in Stockton, Missouri with my cousins seeing nests of owls and vultures, finding mushrooms, and visiting "Big Brutus," the world's largest dragline in the middle of nowhere Kansas. No matter what we were doing, my dad always led us off the beaten path.

With every detour my dad took, I became a more diverse person. While some did lead to dead ends, literally, more often than not, they led to an adventure that was more thrilling to me than Chuck E. Cheese.

While my father rarely misses a soccer game, takes me to the majority of my practices and did, in fact, teach me to ride my bike, he is much more than just "one of those dads." He has made an impact on me, turning me into the well-rounded person I am today.

I mean really, how many people do you know that have been "banjoed to bed?"

Juddie Warner, 11th Grade

Mr. Shelby was my foster dad when I was in foster care. He has been a father to me since. I still go and visit him.

He took me fishing a lot. He taught me how to bait my own hook. He taught me how to fish properly.

Mr. Shelby has helped me open my eyes to see the world around me. I went into his home not believing in God and I left believing God. He taught me how I should treat others. He helped me become who I am. He helped me notice when someone is hurting. He taught me how to love everyone.

Mr. Shelby changed my life. He refused to give up on me. When I was testing him, he still loved me. He is the best thing I've got to having a great dad. Mr. Shelby is amazing. I've learned so much from him. He still teaches me things to this day. He taught me how to speak to my elder. He taught me how I should be treated. He taught me that giving up won't get me anywhere in life. I don't know where I'd be if he'd given up on me.

Mr. Shelby is awesome, he loves everyone. His kids are lucky to have him as a dad. He'll always be my dad, even though I'm not his daughter. He'll always play a big role in my life. I will forever thank him for all he's done for me. He'll be my dad until the day I die. No one can replace him. I couldn't have asked for a better father figure. He loves me even during my darkest moments. I will never stop needing him. Even when he's gone, he'll still be teaching me things every day.

Shaneka Cabe, 12th Grade

My father means the world to me and I never realized it until last year. I have always lived with my mother, but I had a special bond with my dad. My father took me in when my mother was no longer able to take care of me. At the beginning I was quiet and stayed in my room just thinking and focusing on school work, but soon I became submissive to my father's joking, protective and caring ways. He has always been involved in my success in school and he continues to encourage me to finish high school and go to college.

I am a senior now and I sit back and wish I had built a stronger bond with my father years ago. Just recently, my father was diagnosed with colon cancer and, although I held my composure when he told me, I was breaking down inside. I pray every day that my father wins this battle and continues to stand by my side as I go through my journey. I know my father will see me complete every goal I have in life. I decided that I wouldn't regret anything that has happened in the past, but I will and have accepted the relationship I have with my father now. I appreciate everything that my father does for me and I will never take him for granted. I am striving to be my best because I know my father has sacrificed and worked hard for me to succeed. I love my father with all my heart and once again, he means the world to me.