

purpose in pain

Senior Plans to Care for Kids



Sage Bucksbee

By Adalyn Jensen

For some students, education was marked by wandering down hallways and making new friends, but for senior Sage Bucksbee, education involved sitting in a dimly-lit hospital room, machines beeping, nurses coming and going, and tests being run.

"I was in and out of doctor's offices since as long as I can remember in elementary school," Bucksbee said. "More recently, I was in the hospital during the summer of this year."

After spending many hours over many days and many years in the hospital dealing with anemia, that feeling of isolation flooded her until someone visited her.

"I had a teacher come in when I was in the hospital, having me read books or do math flashcards, and even though I was in a hospital bed,

I felt like a normal kid who was at a normal day of school," she said. "It gave me the consistency I needed to feel like a kid again."

That single, transformative memory led to Sage's future. The feeling of belonging she experienced became the cornerstone of her drive, leading her to realize that she wanted to help kids feel normal during a disruptive time.

"It provides a strong sense of purpose. I feel like I'm making a meaningful difference in the world," she said. "I always wanted to work with kids and make a difference, and teachers have such an impact on the world through the next generation."

She planned to earn a Bachelor's in Early Elementary Education and Special Education at Doane University, then further her outreach through training in hospital education because in long-term

children's hospitals, the kids weren't able to attend school due to being in care. However, this job was not as easy as it sounds.

"I would have to learn how to adapt the curriculum to students' individual needs, working one-on-one, usually at their bedside, and collaborating with students, parents, and hospital staff to maintain academic progress as best as possible during their stay," she said.

Bucksbee noted that children in the hospital were still students, and their lives didn't stop simply because they were receiving medical care. Having a teacher available could help the young people stay connected to learning, routines, and a sense of a normal life, which could make the hospital experience less overwhelming, reminding them that they were more than their treatment or illness.

"Every day would look different because no two children are the same, but I would work with their home school to make sure they were on track academically while getting care," she said.

She said that the main hardship would be the possible loss of students, but that it could make her work harder for your other students and keep their memory alive.

Bucksbee said that she wanted kids in the hospital to feel smart, cared for, and like they matter, just like she did.

