

*Taylor Doane - Age 16*

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*Davenport, Iowa*

*Evolve Dance Company*

*My "life story" is quite standard, as is my "dance story". Like many other girls around the U.S, I'm just a normal and average dancer, but in my parents' eyes I'm still an amazing dancer and person. They put me in dance when I was 3, and I fell in love with it. In my opinion, it's one of the best things they've ever done for me. They've given me a way to express, free, lose, and yet find myself over and over again through a single art form. They've given me a way to learn self-discipline, good work ethic, and my own strengths. They've given me a refuge, a place where I can be myself, be taught new and amazing things, and be emotionally and physically challenged. A place where goals are reached and dreams are worked for. They've given me the opportunity to dance. That alone is enough to fulfill my life with happiness, yet they do so much more for me, dance and non-dance related. They inspire me so much, and I can only dream that I can one day be like them.*

*A tribute to my mother, the most selfless person I know. She does everything for my siblings and I and nothing for herself. No matter how tired, frustrated, or crabby she is, she still does what she can to help and to make us happy. She drives my sister and I 40 minutes one way, 4 nights a week, for us to dance. And even though she could be doing more important things like running errands, or doing something for HERSELF, she stays at the studio and watches nearly all of our classes. She sacrifices so much to keep my family and I happy, and 99.9% of the time we don't even thank or show any gratitude towards her for what she has done. And she definitely deserves to hear thank you more often, so this is my way of thanking her. I never say, or express it, instead I keep to myself, but the woman who gave birth to me and loves me unconditionally, despite my many wrong doings, is my best friend.*

*A tribute to my dad, the most hardworking, honest and greatest man I know. He's watched me grow as a dancer since I was 3 and has been one of my biggest supporters. He went to all of my dance recitals and even did the Dads' Dance, where he did a little bit of ballet dressed as a Swiss Maid. I remember thinking that it was the coolest and funniest thing that he got onstage and danced in front of a big audience dressed like a girl. And although he may not realize it, but having him there to watch me dance is the best feeling, even if it's just during rehearsals and class. Because of his job, which requires traveling out of state a lot, him being there to watch me now means even more. For most of the year he spends traveling the country doing his job. He gives up spending time with his family to provide the necessities and luxuries for his family. He, too, is extremely selfless. He does his best to keep my family and I happy and safe. Even when he can't make it home to watch me dance, I still know that he is proud of me, no matter how good or bad I think I did. No matter what it comes to, my dad is always there offering support, comedic relief, and big bear hugs.*

*Both of my parents are selfless and amazing people. They'd give the world to me if they could, but who needs the world when you have a supportive family at your side? My parents have given and taught me so many important things such as humbleness, discipline, and love. They believe in my dreams, and are continuously helping me achieve my goals and work to make my dreams a reality. They do the same things that many other parents do for their children. Yet they aren't acknowledged for all of the things, big and small, that they do.*

*I'm not good at emotional and mushy things, and I'm definitely not good at expressing my feelings verbally. But writing this essay gave me a great opportunity to express my gratitude and thanks towards my parents, giving them a little reassurance that, although I don't express it, I am always thankful. So here's a much deserved tribute to my parents. I love you.*