

## CONNER DeWEERD SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



### CONNER DeWEERD

**is a senior at Brecksville/  
Broadview Heights High  
School. She comes from  
a large family and has six  
siblings. She enjoys reading  
and playing sports, especially  
soccer. Her goal is to major in  
youth sports/education and  
start a youth sports camp  
for underprivileged children.  
Conner has been accepted at  
Malone University in Canton.**

I winced as I anticipated what was coming; the sound of my sister gagging herself, vomit hitting the toilet. I had watched as her gorgeous body faded away into nothing more than bones and flesh. This wasn't the Emma\* I knew.

As I bent down to wipe her mouth and help her up from the floor I thought about my lovely Emma. How did she become this living skeleton? Emma was two years older than me and she was always the most beautiful girl and happy sister. Wherever she went the boys would drool and fight over her, while the girls would flash envious glares. Without thinking I asked, "How?" As soon as the words left my mouth Emma looked up at me with those glossy eyes and whispered, "Ben." With that simple answer I understood.

I could tell from the beginning that Ben did not really love her. I should have told her that she could find someone that loved her just as she was, for her inner beauty. But I didn't. It seemed like their relationship really would survive, at least Emma seemed convinced of it. I still was dissuaded but I forced a smile, for Emma's sake. I regret my countless words of false hope as we both hid from the truth. It would be impossible to fully understand what her "true love" did to her; slander, insults, bruises, and lies about her appearance. I hated him for making my sister hate herself.

After three years of emotional and physical abuse my sister was lucky to escape from him, but her physical pain continued, encouraged by the emotional storm raging within. This is when the pain inside became visible on the outside. This is when she became a victim of bulimia, and herself.

I spent years watching Emma let her body weaken and deteriorate into almost nothing. And then suddenly, she was nothing. She had sunken into such a state of depression and finally surrendered herself to the disease that controlled her for years. Hate had taken my precious Emma.

Self-abuse had taken hold of her defenseless soul and caused her to wither away to death. When she lost her battle I devoted my time to trying to solve the problems that lead to her self-hate. I had learned that seventy percent of bulimics suffer from depression and that thirteen percent of teen girls purge, just like my sister had. These statistics drove me to try and end self-hate. I volunteer at clinics, counseling those struggling with self abuse, helping people of all ages realize their worth and beauty. I work with the National Eating Disorders Association, fighting against the self-hate that millions of people are trying to overcome. One day I will be a doctor, sorting out other's struggles and pain; doing my part to end self-hate. This is my tribute to Emma.

*\* All names have been changed*

