

June 30, 2014

Mr. James Philhower:

I write these words with great difficulty. I was Cole's English teacher during his sophomore and senior years for English 10 and English 101. I had the pleasure to see his tremendous growth in three short years. I remember Cole for having a healthy balance of playfulness and seriousness. He embodied the rare person who fully captures and appreciates what matters in almost everything he does.

Cole was magnetic, bright, and authentic. His charisma and charm emitted certain sincerity. He always lived in the moment, and upon hearing this tragic news, I couldn't help but think back to an essay Cole wrote last September. The assignment called for choosing a brief moment that had great significance, and Cole chose to write about saying goodbye to his college-bound friends at the end of last summer. The piece is poignant, and Cole chose his words carefully. His final paragraph reads as follows:

After I wished him luck, I got into my car and began to drive home. The quiet, dark drive kept me lost in thought, and I caught myself reminiscing about all of the best memories I had. I realized that time won't stand still just for me, and we all need to carry on with our futures regardless of what happens. I'll always have the memories of everything we did, from playing under the warm summer sun to having parties where everyone felt at home because we were our own small family. Being able to look back on everything makes me appreciate it more than I did in the moment, and I can say those three words: It's been real.

Cole's words move me. They show his love and devotion for those closest to him. I can see his smile, hear his laugh, and feel his sincerity as he pensively considered all that mattered most. These memories give me some solace, and I hope Cole's words help at some point during this time of tragedy.

I have included a copy of the full essay along with a link to the words electronically (<http://goo.gl/14ZiQ0>).

My thoughts and prayers go out to you as you mourn the loss of such a special child.

Please know how truly sorry I am.

Sincerely,



Michael McIntyre
English Teacher
Kettle Moraine High School

Time Won't Stop for Me

The night I said goodbye to my best friend was one I won't forget. Ever since I could remember, I was always hanging around with an older group of kids. I couldn't stand my class, so the pattern stuck with me up until my senior year. I was always running around with the grade above or below me with the exception of some close friends in my 2014 class.

Summer was winding down, and all of last year's seniors including my best friends began to talk about college preparation and when they would be leaving. The thought hardly entered my mind that I would be losing a majority of my closest friends because they were all a year older than me. The thought would linger in the back of my mind, but nothing really hit me until I met with my group of best friends one last time.

The summer going into my senior year was the best summer I'd had. I was busy everyday between lacrosse and hanging out with friends. We were always busy with our own errands during the day and would hang out when we could as late as we could. The nights just began to roll together and everyday was going by faster than the last. It was like our summer was one giant hangout that didn't stop for anything.

Until the last day actually came.

We didn't think much of it leading up to the last night I saw them. We'd just have casual conversations about who was rooming with who and where they'd be going to school, so at the time, I was hit with the awful realization that I wouldn't see many of the people closest to me for quite some time. Sure they can come back on break and visit from time to time, but that just isn't the same.

When the last night finally came around, my bestfriends and I would do what was almost routine. We hung out for a few hours later on in the night like usual and met up with our other friends to figure out plans for what to do next. All of them started to talk about all of their memories and great times they had which prompted me to do the same. I began to notice what kind of impact these guys had on my life. The places I went to, things I did and experienced were all with this group of guys that was going to continue on with their future as I was stuck with one more year to go. When the time came for everyone to leave I stood with my best friend and we both tried to avoid what we knew was coming. I looked at him and he looked back, we shook hands and pulled each other in for a hug while saying the same exact words. "It's been real." Those were the only words to sum up our experiences together, truly real, and it didn't surprise me that it was all we both said.

After I wished him luck, I got into my car and began to drive home. The quiet, dark drive kept me lost in thought, and I caught myself reminiscing about all of the best memories I had. I realized that time won't stand still just for me, and we all need to carry on with our futures regardless of what happens. I'll always have the memories of everything we did, from playing under the warm summer sun to having parties where everyone felt at home because we were our own small family. Being able to look back on everything makes me appreciate it more than I did in the moment, and I can say those three words: It's been real.