

# Growing Up & Embracing Life After Loss

By Laura Krotky

*“Dealing with grief can make you afraid – afraid of many things – and I exercised letting go of that fear this summer. This is something I will be forever grateful for.”*

Melanie’s 16-year old twins, Rachel and Alex, are growing up. They were just 12 years old in 2016 when the family was accepted into Wildflower’s program. The whole family was still reeling from dad’s death a year earlier. He had been such an



*16 Year Old Twins Rachel & Alex*

important part of their lives. Even though he had been ill for several years, he was always able to help them get ready for school in the mornings and welcome them home in the afternoons. His passing was unexpected and devastating for the twins and Melanie.

When Melanie shared her story with Wildflower, we knew we could help. Melanie and her Wildflower Family Liaison selected Fessenden Summer Camp for the twins’ first summer at camp. Fessenden has an incredible staff of passionate, experienced educators. Rachel and Alex filled their days with swimming, team sports, art and new friendships. Both teens flourished there. For

Melanie, knowing her children were in a safe and nurturing environment provided real peace of mind while she worked.



*With Dad in 20xx*

This past summer was special for Rachel. In addition to enjoying several weeks at Fessenden as a Counselor in Training (CIT), she also traveled to Puerto Rico on a 2-week service trip offered by Apogee Adventures.

Here is what Rachel wrote about her trip:

“I’d like to thank you for your generosity, because without it, I never would have had the opportunity to help out in Puerto Rico . . . The

bioluminescent bay we were in is the brightest bio bay in the world. My favorite part was when we went snorkeling and I got to touch a sea turtle! Thank you, thank you, thank you!”

Wildflower also received a letter from Melanie. Writing as a widowed single parent, Melanie offered a window into how Wildflower’s support sparked her own growth and renewal while the twins were happy at camp. She wrote:



*Melanie with Alex and Rachel in 2019*

“Although it was a big step for Rachel and an experience she wanted, it was an experience I didn’t know I needed until her return. As my children get older, I have grown to realize that they can and will move forward, that they are strong, confident young adults. I have to let them experience things and do things “out of the norm.” I can’t be fearful and afraid of new experiences. Dealing with grief can make you afraid – afraid of many things – and I exercised letting go of that fear this summer. This is something I will be forever grateful for.”

Wildflower’s support can be transformative not only for the children we serve, but also for the surviving parents. It has made a world of difference for Melanie, Rachel and Alex.

This year, we expanded our program to provide support to 80 children through the gift of summer camp and enrichment opportunities. Since 2004, Wildflower, along with our camp and related partners, has awarded more than \$1.95 million in tuition relief to our families.