

Deborah Middleditch's life was full of moments of adversity and resilience. As a young woman, she had been an amazing athlete, her feet pounding the earth as she ran through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the scent of pine and Lake Superior breeze filling her lungs. Her natural abilities as a talented runner had been evident from early in her childhood. But, Deborah's life has had plenty of challenges that prevented her from focusing on athletics. She had faced the dark depths of an eating disorder leading to the turmoil of a conflicted household, and the shadow of mental illness that had threatened to consume her. Living with bipolar disorder is like being on a relentless rollercoaster, where emotions, energy, and thoughts travel between extreme highs and debilitating lows, making everyday life a challenging and unpredictable journey. Despite these hardships, Deborah has built a life filled with love and purpose, giving birth to seven children who would each grow into compassionate and strong individuals.

Deborah is a mental health warrior, armed with a remarkable spirit and a heart that refuses to surrender. She often feels frustration and resentment about having her two twin daughters taken away from her, but she never lets that define her. One of the twins, Kayla, has come to live with Deborah for three consecutive summers while growing up. Kayla's adoption story is a beautiful one, where the situation allowed her to spend time with her biological mother. Deborah and Kayla cherished the memories of those summers.

Another one of Deborah's children, Amber, would come to realize the profound impact of her mother's unwavering determination. Amber had been adopted by her maternal grandparents at just a year old, but she had always maintained a deep bond with Deborah, visiting a few times a year. As Amber navigated her own struggles with mental health in her early twenties, she found guidance in her mother's example. After graduating from college, Amber had found the transition to adulthood to be very challenging. But Deborah's commitment to her job as a motel cleaner, despite the lack of transportation and the miles she walked each day served as a beautiful example of hard work. Deborah would wake up every morning at 4 am, she would get dressed, grab a cup of coffee, and head out into the cold, her feet carrying her to the laundry mat where she worked.

With her mom's example, Amber currently works full-time as a Family Service Worker, helping families in Head Start. In addition, Amber has run two marathons in 2024, feeling guided by the spirits and her mom's athletic ability. Currently, Deborah is an active member of the Get Away Center, for those individuals who once previously struggled with mental health or mental illness. Deborah's story was one of triumph, a reminder that even in the darkest moments, the human spirit can persevere. And for Amber and Kayla, their mother's legacy would forever be tattooed in their hearts, a reminder of hope and resilience.

Deborah M. (Written by her daughter, Amber)
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