

To me, the Barrington Public Library is like a long-lost friend. My earliest memories of the library revolve around trips with my daycare or with my aunt. I have vivid memories of running around the children's room on the second floor, seeing Happy the guinea pig and practicing typing on these old computer keyboards that were lying around. After checking out a book, we would go down to the basement to look at the arrowheads that were discovered in the town, then head over to the playground. Every aspect of discovering and learning was so fun to me, either from reading a new book or meeting new friends. It was the highlight of my day and leaving was always accompanied by a slight feeling of sadness.

Though as time passed, the library became more absent in my life. An occasional visit was made, especially on warm summer days in my middle school years, but I feel I lost that special connection.

But sometimes, under some circumstances, you and that old childhood friend might just happen to cross paths again.

Entering the latter half of my high school career, I knew I had a lot to look forward to, but also a lot of work to achieve it. It began with needing a nice space to study for my harder AP classes, but I kept finding myself returning to the library. My solo study sessions became group study sessions before tests, sparking some fun nights that I will remember for a long time. I was able to volunteer at book drives and meet some of the kindest folks who had a true passion for reading. I was able to inspire others by math tutoring classmates and friends through NHS. I inspired myself, utilizing the library as a silent space to write the college essays and supplements that would get me into my dream school. It once again became exciting to go to the library, for the people and the opportunities. That childlike joy I felt long ago had returned.

The library can be whatever you want it to be and more. It can be a quiet space of independent learning or a collaborative one with friends alike. It can be focused on self-improvement or helping others. It can be discovery or exploration, or it could be of comfort.

It is the dynamic nature of the library, from an early age to high school, which has had a significant impact on me. In addition to the people that work and study there, the library helped inspire a period of both academic and personal growth in me that I will forever be thankful for. And as I go off to college, I cannot help but feel that nagging sadness I felt when leaving the library all those years ago. All the memories will be left behind, but thankfully will forever be remembered.

But who knows? Perhaps in the future, just as with an old friend, our paths may cross again once more.