

## **2023 Scholarship Essay Award Winner: Kristen Baker**

Over my four years of high school, the library has always been the answer to any predicaments I find myself in. Whether it be a night-before cram for a crucial test, or even the need for student guidance and collaboration, the Barrington Public Library has always been available. It has consistently met all of my educational, social, and even creative needs through its quiet ambiance, groupings of studious individuals, and especially the lengthy selections of literature that my middle school self readily grew accustomed to. But my connection with the library began far before I even learned to read. Nearly every weekend, my family and I would find ourselves at the library playground, running and playing until we no longer could. Not only was our family bond strengthened, but new relationships with other children were fostered. I learned about the importance of connection, inclusiveness, and most importantly, kindness. The hours of fun found on the playground were only complimented by the childhood joys I found on the inside. I will not lie, however, when I say that it was truly the guinea pigs that lured me from the slides and swings. The hours I spent in the children's room reading picture books and feeding the guinea pigs had almost timelessly transferred to making new friends and receiving help from fellow peers in the teen room. The transformation of the library has felt rather linear to my own educational and personal transformation, as hints of the original children's room coupled with the new study room, a true life-saver during midterms, serves as a metaphorical tether between my childhood and near adulthood. Any quandaries I had could always be answered by at least one resource available, especially as I could always count on the friendly staff to point me in the right direction. The Barrington Public Library is more than just the reason for good grades; it represents the foundations of characteristics I value in myself, has allowed me to expand my social abilities, and has presented a healthy escape through literature from any realities that prove to be far too difficult to escape on my own.