

An appeal to Liberty Board on behalf of Angela Page

To the editor:
Dear Members of the Board of Education:

I write to you on behalf of my mother and our family to urge you not to make the decision to terminate my mother's tenured employment within the Liberty School District.

I write this letter of appeal with a heavy heart. Having grown up in Liberty, I have witnessed and always trusted that we, as a community, would overcome difficult circumstances in humane, respectful and just ways. It pains me, therefore, that the events which have unfolded should have resulted in such impersonal reactions so dictated by legalistic bureaucracies which override concern for another's humanity. This is not the Liberty that I know.

Many of you will be able to testify to my mother's dedication towards serving the members, in particular, the children of Liberty. My mother has been a committed teacher in this community for over two decades, and it is arguably this same commitment to the school district that has cost her her health, her career, and her freedom to live as a normal member of society. It has since become clear that, had the school district been more attentive to the appalling conditions of the middle school library, or had the school district been better informed about the potential dangers of mold infestations, my mother might not have been sent into an unsafe working environment, where she unknowingly breathed in dangerous amounts of aspergillus spores, and neither my mother, our family, nor this Board of Education would have been faced with the current situation.

I wish to point out that I am aware of, and appreciate, the difficulties that this Board of Education faces. Yet I would also appeal to the members of this Board to act with some compassion for, or at least acknowledgement of, the difficulties that my mother and our family have gone through, and still go through. My mother's illness has stripped her away from my siblings and me, and changed our lives as we knew it. Not only did the illness place a huge financial burden on our family, but the sudden deterioration of her condition left Malcolm, Miranda and me virtually homeless and motherless overnight. With my mother being consumed and tormented by her illness, I suddenly found myself, at the age of 17, with no support, whether financial, emotional or otherwise, from my mother. Due



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Morgan Hardy is a former student of Liberty Central School, and the daughter of Angela Page.

to her multi-chemical sensitivity, we could not have any physical contact with my mother for more than two years, during which time Miranda, who was then only 14, had to resort to an almost nomadic lifestyle of seeking refuge at various friends' homes. Even today, my relationship with my mother is confined mostly to phone conversations and hour-long visitations. As much as these misfortunes were not willfully inflicted upon my mother or our family, the impact of my mother's unfortunate but work-induced illness is not a spot to be willed out.

Indeed, had my mother or our family been any less understanding of the unintentionality of the situation, we would have taken more action in response to the pain and hardship brought upon our family by the school district's negligence. It has been in the spirit of cooperation and community that we have endured the past four grueling years, and it is with this same spirit, I hope, that the members of the Board of Education will deliberate their decision and each cast their vote. If the Board of Education had not known what some seemingly harmless mold could do to my mother, each member of the Board should now be in full knowledge of the injury that he or she would do to an already grievous situation, should he or she really vote for terminating my mother's tenure on the

grounds of the loss of her ability to work on campus, for which the School District has been deemed legally responsible.

The Board of Education stands at a crossroad. It fully has power to opt for a solution which will be advantageous to all parties involved, such as by accommodating my mother with off-campus employment, or it could choose to make the situation yet more difficult. There is still room for cooperation. However, should the Board of Education decide to terminate my mother's tenure at the School District, my mother and our family will be left with no choice but to take serious action.

I urge the Members of the Board to make their decisions on the basis of humanity, respect and justice, for the sake of the community of Liberty, and for the sake of those principles and values which we claim to hold dear in this country.

Morgan Lillian Hardy
Liberty