

**My Awesome Journey:
How attending DVS transformed my Life**
By: Shalyn Dove Sager

Three years at DVS might seem like a short amount of time to some, but during those few years I have learned so much. I have learned how to think for myself, grown in my personal views, and matured into the person that I am today.

I came to DVS when I was 15. After being home-schooled all my life, attending a school was going to be a very new experience for me. Hanging out with other kids my age as opposed to hanging out with my mom all day was a new and fun thing! Going from having a very strict curriculum to not having a curriculum at all was one of the biggest changes to my everyday life.

The first time I heard about the Sudbury philosophy I remember being very critical of it. I thought it would be just like a daycare for kids of all ages. I came with my mom to see the school one day and sat in the office while listening to the staff explaining the way the school was run. When we left, my mind was made up that I did NOT want to attend this school. I thought it was very weird and that I would never adjust to it or like it. Well, I did some more thinking and ended up having a visiting week the following school year. It was a new way of learning, different from any other I had ever experienced, but after attending for a week I fell in love with it.

“Do you believe in God?” came up in a conversation between me and a few of my fellow School Meeting members. I had always been raised on my parents’ way of thinking that “yes, there is a God.” But while I was engaged in this conversation I realized that I needed to find the answer I was looking for and believe it for myself so that down the road if someone asked me why I believed there was a God I could answer them with my own answer, instead of answering with, “my parents have always told me there is, that’s why I believe it.” That night I went home and proved to myself why I believed there is a God; I had to find my own answer. This was just the beginning of my awesome journey at DVS.

When I first came, I remember being extremely shy and reserved. I would sit in the SQR and read a book or eat my lunch. I would see everyone talking and hanging out but I didn’t feel comfortable going out to be with everyone. I was used to my friends at church that I had known basically all my life and I had never really been in a situation where I didn’t know anyone at all. Meeting new people was always something that I disliked. I was scared there were going to be little cliques of friends that wouldn’t accept me, that people would think I was weird because of my long hair or the skirts I always wore. But as soon as I began to examine that way of thinking, I found it was not like that at all. Rather, there was a big, loving and respectful family waiting for me to come and join them. I found myself changing, but I loved it. All the fear and shyness were leaving and I felt myself more at ease than ever before. I was turning into this crazy, fun-loving and talkative person. I was able to make friends a lot easier, and I wasn’t so

embarrassed to talk to people I didn't know. I began to learn new things every day, I was no longer learning from textbooks or teachers, but from the experiences of life itself. This school taught me how to learn on my own and helped me become something I didn't know I could be. For that I will always be grateful.

Soon I began to understand the way things were run from day to day. So I took a leap of faith and decided to run for JC Secretary in the school elections. I was amazed when I won. This led to everything from sitting in closed JC's for up to five hours grilling people and trying to solve mysteries on extreme complaints, to just simply solving a mess complaint that *someone* wrote because something was dropped on the floor, shrugged at, and not picked up. I have learned that patience is not just something to have in the back of my mind, but rather it is something to be exercised!! Knowing how and when to use my powers as JC Clerk and request that someone raise their hand and wait to be called on before talking was hard for me to do at times, especially when it involved a staff member. But through the years I learned that I would be respected, by staff or fellow student, in any decision that I made as JC Clerk or School Meeting Chair. Sure there were times during JC when we would laugh and joke around about how funny a complaint was. But there were also times that showed me self-discipline was something I needed to practice and know how to use. At one point I was the JC Clerk, School Meeting Chair and Elections Clerk. Now that was a load of work! But it was very fun and in that time I proved to myself that I could actually do more than I thought I could. There were many times during my years as JC Clerk when I did not feel like being involved with any part of JC whatsoever, I didn't want to help run the meeting and I definitely did not want to do all the computer work. But it was then that Anne-Martine would so sweetly say, "Shalyn, you're going to do the sentence sheets today right?" It was then I realized people were counting on me to do my job, so why not just get it over with.

Two huge things I learned at DVS were respect and love, for other people as well as myself. At the beginning, I judged people according to how they looked and acted when I first met them. I operated on first impressions and wasn't open to people who thought differently than I did or did things I considered odd. Now I can truly say that I respect people for who they are despite my first impression. After establishing that way of thinking I found myself some friends that I respect, admire and love more than anything or anyone in this world!

As some of you probably know, music is a major part of my life. Well, this was another place where self-discipline had to be practiced. Over the years I have taught myself to play the drums, piano, and some guitar. One of the hardest things I have had to learn is how to stop when asked. There were times it was extremely hard to put the drumsticks down, but as the time went on, I found I was able to honor someone's request to "stop playing!! I have a headache!" When asked to teach someone how to play the drums I was a little intimidated and shy... I was never taught how to play and so I thought I would never be able to teach. I am very glad to say that I have proved myself wrong, Micaela, you rock on the drums!

When they tried to tell me I had just as much power as a life-loving, chore-loving, mess-hating, class-teaching, debate-raising, phone-answering, vegetable-loving, worldly staff member... I was wholly convinced they were trying to "pull the wool over my eyes." But 'gol darnit' it was the honest-to-goodness truth! As I was raised, adults always had more say than kids, but at DVS that isn't the case; everyone is equal. Getting into an argument with a staff member was just another day-to-day thing. At the end, I came away with more respect for them than I had before. From math class with Vicente and Anne to history class (that I so little showed up for) with Anne-Martine, I learned that work and homework don't always have to be this big hassle. Here I actually enjoyed doing my work instead of sitting at home doodling on my paper trying every way I could think of to get out of doing it! I liked it because there was no sense of "if you don't do your work and pass with a 90% you flunk and have to do it all over again." I could take it at my own pace, and if I didn't understand something I could say, "I am so lost, can you please explain that again?" Being able to stop and laugh out loud with the staff members because they created the problem using the wrong number, or to be able to prove that they were wrong felt really good at times.

When I started attending DVS I didn't have a set plan of what I wanted to do after I graduated. As I started to learn more about life and mature more in the way I handled things, I came to realize what I wanted to do after graduating. I realized that even though it might not get me anywhere big, I wanted to find a college that focused on music. And so after this amazing journey is over I will start a new chapter in my life. Some of the plans that I hope to fulfill in the beginning of this chapter are: taking care of my niece and nephew for the start of summer, going out and applying for a job, getting my driver's license, and applying for the fall semester at DVC where I will be taking piano, music theory, guitar and voice classes for a few semesters. After those goals are accomplished I will most likely apply to Indiana Bible College, a college known for its music programs and recordings. The entrance requirements for this college are a written letter of recommendation from my church's pastor and a high school diploma. If accepted, I will attend for four years and get a Bachelor's Degree in Music. As to how I will use that degree I have considered many options, it very well may be that I get it and go on to do something else other than music, but I will have accomplished something that I really want.

Through all the learning and experiences I have had here, I feel ready to become a part of the adult community. I can't say I'm not nervous about starting the new journey, but I feel I have accomplished all I need to help me get started. To everyone that has shared in this journey with me, the time has come for me to say goodbye, but don't think that means you won't be seeing me often. I love DVS and promise I will come visit as often as I am allowed. I might just come back in a few years and become a staff member!! I will forever remember my years here as the best years of my life! Thank you all for being a part of it.

Acknowledgements

Of course I love every one of my fellow School Meeting Members and I consider them all as friends. But there are certain people that have really helped me become who I am today and taught me how to love and respect. Micaela, I love you so much!! It's impossible to say goodbye to my best friend/ other half/ little sister. So, this isn't goodbye... it's see you very soon!! I will miss hanging out with you everyday more than anything! Promise me that our friendship, plus our love of frozen kit-kats, camping, playing music, SDLI's, two in the morning card-playing, WICKED, tickling cooked pigs, frightened biscuits and Griffin will continue **forever!** Don't forget to keep your sweatshirt strings EVEN!! And yes dude, at 94 years old, if we aren't still hanging out 24/7, I will hunt you down and make you be my maid of honor in my wedding... *hugs*. Tereza, if it's ever a matter of *life* and *death* make sure your in the *cautious world* and not on the *oiled* moon! You have no idea how glad I am that we are really hecka good friends. Don't EVER lose your awesome style, amazing sense of humor or your ability to always cheer me up and make me laugh! I LOVE YOU!!! Griffin Miles, my little brother, thank you so much for the countless amount of trips you made to get me food. You can get taller than me and mature all you want, but please don't lose the awesome Griffiness that I have grown to love. I don't think but I know that you're awesome! Rose, there could never be another you and that's final!! I'm not leaving you, I'm simply turning into a bad smell that lingers in the school...Thanks for all the talks, hugs and laughs. Anna Kate and Joey my original "little ones," being friends with you has helped me become the crazy "big buddy" I am today. No matter what, don't ever stop being my awesome and crazy "little ones"! I love you very much and promise to visit you all the time!! Thomas, Captain Greggles and Jared, don't stop being awesome! As the song from Wicked so clearly points out, "So much of me is made of what I've learned from you, You'll be with me, like a handprint on my heart." You have all become part of my family and no words can express how much I'm going to miss you. I love you so much and will never forget all the memories we have made together.

V-man, AM2, and pomegranate-loving Anne thank you for all of your hard work! The school would not be where it is today without you and I know I wouldn't either! Thanks for the card games, I.O.U.'s, up-lifting talks, and unforgettable memories!

To my fellow graduates: Fluffhead (Matt), Alyssa, and Sarah, the moment we have been waiting for/dreading is finally here, and a new part of our life is about to begin. We have shared awesome times together and I hope that even though we will be going our different ways, we will never forget the times we've shared and the friends we have made. I wish you all good luck and hope our paths cross a lot in the times ahead. Congratulations!!

I LOVE YOU ALL!!!!!!!!!!