

My Personal Michigan Hero-2025

As I admire the night sky, the stars glimmer softly and faint constellations scatter across the heavens. Just as my gaze starts to wander, one bright, bold star catches my eye — shining stronger and more beautiful than the rest. That's how I see my grandpa: a positive, optimistic star lighting up a dim world. My grandpa is my hero because he has shown me what it means to work hard to achieve my dreams.

My grandpa dreamed of teaching agriculture and raising animals because farming and raising livestock is a way of life in Pigeon, Michigan. When my grandparents were looking for a home, they found a plot of land with a big red barn. There wasn't a house, but that barn was the first step towards making his dreams come true. My grandpa quickly filled the barn with sheep and hogs, even though my grandma hated all of the flies that came with them! Over his 40-year career at Laker High School, he opened his beloved barn to all of his "city" students, passionately taught agriscience and FFA, won National Agriscience Teacher of the Year, and even served as president of the Michigan Agriculture Teachers Association. When I look at his display of awards, I can see the results of his dreams and hard work. However, even more prized than his awards are the ribbons and trophies that were eventually won by his children and grandchildren, not because of the awards themselves, but because each ribbon has a

story filled with laughter and love and was the direct result of hard work and perseverance.

I began showing lambs when I was eight years old and that first year was tough. Working with an animal that's scared of you takes patience — something I didn't have much of. Whenever I got frustrated, my grandpa would calmly show me what I'd done wrong and how to fix it. Every summer since, I have spent countless hours preparing for the fair with the goal of winning my showmanship class. This year, at age 13, as I put on my show outfit and walked to the ring, I started to tune everything out except my grandpa telling me to "have fun." Having fun in the show ring means intensely staring at the judge. When I saw the judge put the microphone into his back pocket and walk in my direction, my heart skipped a beat. He put his hand out to shake my hand and a tsunami of happiness took over me! I immediately looked to my grandpa, and when his eyes met mine, I knew that we did it. He was proud of me and that was better than any award.

Like the stars, I look up to my grandpa every day. He reminds me that with a positive view of life, you can achieve anything. I strive to be like him — hardworking, loving, and kind. My grandpa is my hero, my teacher, and my brightest star — always shining.