

Published Author Starts A New Chapter

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Since she was seven years old, Alivia has loved telling stories. Starting off with short pieces of fiction, she eventually began taking on more lengthy projects that explored her personal struggles and thoughts.

“I love being able to escape into a world that I can control,” says Alivia. “It just makes me so happy to write!”

Unfortunately, due to bullying and her own struggles with mental health, her previous school was no longer a good fit for her. Alivia needed a school with **less drama** and one that would **support her creative ambitions**. In her teacher, Colleen Darling, Alivia found a mentor who would support her unique needs as a student and as a writer.

“I think what I find the coolest about Ms. Darling is that she’s so compassionate for her students,” says Alivia. “She really cares for them, no matter the circumstance.”

In our Independent Study program, Alivia created a personalized learning plan that allows her to **finish school while pursuing her writing and other interests**. With her teacher’s support (and editing skills!), Alivia published her second novel, [Waves \(2021\)](#) which tells the story of a teenage girl who copes with the death of her older brother. Her schedule also allows her time to take community college courses, volunteer at a local cat shelter, and participate in Visions’ Find Your Voice writing class starting this spring.

Turning the Page

Alivia is on track to graduate in Fall 2022, after which she plans on attending a four year university to study animal care, another great passion of hers. Her goal is to become a veterinarian that helps exotic small animals or cats. Does this mean she’s done writing after school?

“No, of course not!” Alivia says. “When I have time to write I will write, and when I’m working as a veterinarian I will still be brainstorming ideas all day long!”

Alivia thanks her teacher for her continual support and has a message for those who also struggle with depression:

“For anyone who is struggling with depression know that you are not alone. Know that you are loved. **Know that depression does not define or control you**. You just have to believe in yourself; that’s the first step.”

