

# John Carroll graduate doesn't let limited eyesight hold her back



**By Elizabeth Lowe**

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BEL AIR - Maggie Buckley was diagnosed with Stargardt disease, the juvenile onset of macular degeneration, at age 10. She didn't fully grasp what that meant until she was in middle school.

"Back then, glasses still helped," said Buckley, who graduated from The John Carroll School May 31. "My blind spot was very minimal."

Two years ago, her eyesight began to worsen; she was forced to stop playing junior varsity field hockey and lacrosse because she couldn't see the ball.

The 17-year-old, who is legally blind, has a statue of St. Lucy, patron saint of blindness, in her bedroom.

While family members pray for her, the parishioner of St. Margaret, Bel Air, said, "I don't consider myself in need, so I don't pray for myself. It's part of my life."

She doesn't dwell on her limitations, which include not driving and not being able to read the menu on the wall at fast food restaurants.

"It has made me a more independent person, it has made me a more dependent person," said Buckley, who added she has learned to ask for help.

At John Carroll, Buckley's guidance counselor ensured teachers knew about her disability. Teachers typed their notes and gave them to her.

"Everybody made it really easy for me," she said. "Right off the bat it was like a second home. I don't think I would be as happy as I am if I went anywhere else."

In class, Buckley used a magnifier if she was reading a book. She enlarges the font when she uses the computer or her Kindle.

"As a sophomore, the progression of this disease wasn't as pronounced as it is now," said Louise Geczy, John Carroll's senior project coordinator, who was Buckley's creative writing teacher. "She doesn't let it limit her any more than it has to."

Buckley, who graduated with a 3.75 GPA and took advanced placement classes, will attend Queens University of Charlotte in Charlotte, N.C., in the fall. She plans to major in English and minor in creative writing, then pursue a career either as a travel writer or in editing and publishing.

Geczy has taught hundreds of students in nearly five decades; only a few made as

large an impression as Buckley.

"A small handful stand out as extraordinary and Maggie is one of those," Geczy said. "You can't be around Maggie without feeling better about the world. Her can-do attitude is infectious."

"She's given me an example of the type of person I want to be, someone who strives to be better," said Elise Gower, a John Carroll religion teacher, who taught Buckley in a social justice class. "Maggie celebrates who is she, she overcomes obstacles with such positivity and she brings out joy in other people."

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