

Liz Wyman  
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Dear Mr. Daniel Keyes,

For as long as I can remember, my youth group and I have volunteered at a psychiatric nursing home in Indianapolis. We have celebrated holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, with the residents, making crafts, singing and sharing refreshments. The first several times we went to the home, I was extremely frightened of the patients, many of whom are mentally retarded and some who have psychiatric illnesses. I was afraid they would hurt my friends or me.

But something changed for me after I read your book, Flowers for Algernon. Now, I view their situation in a new light. Through the eyes of Charlie, I see into the patients' minds and hearts; minds filled with confusion and hearts overflowing with love and compassion. Charlie's struggle through life touched me so deeply that I now feel that I have a very strong bond with the residents at the psychiatric home.

Like Charlie, most of the residents of Rural Health Care were abandoned by their families. To deal with this has to be absolutely horrific. Charlie illustrated the pain of being alone so well that it made me cry. After reading your book, I feel so glad that I have a family that loves me.

Charlie's strength and bravery were very admirable, as he pursued what he always wanted to be, no matter what the cost. He dealt with life, even when things grew grim. He often did not understand what to do in some situations, as everyone, retarded or genius, has experienced. Even when he saw his life begin to crumble, he persevered until he could take no more, as many of the residents at the nursing home have had to do.

Until I read your book, I never truly realized just what mentally retarded people have to put up with in their quest to live normal lives. After reading about Charlie Gordon, I have a new perspective of these wonderful people. They are people filled with curiosity and love. They crave attention, yet are willing to listen. Thank you so much for writing this book. After reading the story of Charlie Gordon, I find I am able to be more of a helpful, loving person myself.

Sincerely,

Liz Wyman