

## Resident Testimonials for the Keith Shawn Smith Award

### **Maddie Swisher (Ehringhaus)**

Several of Maddie's residents remember "crunch time" as one of many ways Maddie provides a space for residents to come together weekly as a community of scholars. "Crunch time," provided Maddie's residents regular opportunities to study together, engage informally on the fourth floor of Ehringhaus, and enjoy snacks while connecting over the week's events. One resident found "crunch time" to be a time when she could "grab a snack and be surrounded by other working scholars." Another resident recalls that "because of [Maddie's] efforts, on any given evening, much of our wing can be found hanging out in the floor kitchen, just talking or helping each other with homework."

Another resident shared "as our RA, Maddie has helped us make connections with the broader campus community. She hosts many events throughout the semester that provide residents with contacts for campus resources. However, Maddie goes *further* than that. She talks with residents about *her* experiences with the Learning and Writing Centers, CAPS, Campus Health, and more. In that way, she offers a positive testimonial for something that might seem intimidating or irrelevant and therefore makes it easier for us to branch out and use these resources."

Others reflected that "Maddie has connected to each of our hearts with every note or piece of candy she drops outside our doors for us to wake up to. She is one of the first people I confide in. She not only serves as a positive role model, but as a close friend. A lot of people make mistakes their first year and having an RA like Maddie has been crucial to my success these past months. Whenever I feel discouraged, she reminds me that it is not the end of the world. Whenever I feel unmotivated, she lights a fire in me."

### **Alicia Lee (Kenan):**

The residents on Alicia's floor all recounted how Alicia masters the unique challenges in creating community within upper class communities. Several of them also shared how this is made even more tricky by the flux of students moving from the floor to study abroad, and welcoming new students in January to an existing community. This takes a special talent, which Alicia clearly exhibits. According to one of her residents, "being an RA for a primarily upper-

class residence hall, it can be very difficult to get your residents to come out and get involved in programs and activities that you organize. This does not stop Alicia, if anything she meets the challenge head on. She has organized numerous programs for us from making vision boards to getting cupcakes for the entire floor.” Another resident recounts, “I really love being on the first floor, there is a palpable sense of community. I think much of this is because of Alicia.” Others describe Alicia as their “rock,” in helping face personal anxieties, and “reliable...going above and beyond to help residents succeed.”

Alicia makes her residents feel connected and engaged in their community while finding ways to make them feel special as individuals. From preparing a resident headed for a hiking trip with water bottles, a flashlight and snacks, to sharing entertaining jokes with another while brushing their teeth at the end of the day, Alicia is remembered by her residents as someone who writes personalized messages to them by hand and recalling details they’ve shared about family members and people important in their lives.

Alicia, thank you for always putting your residents first and creating an environment on the first floor of Kenan that is welcoming for everyone.

**Justin Fouts (Granville Towers):**

Outstanding role model. Thoughtful. Friendly. An excellent human being. And most importantly- Kind. These are the words that were repeated throughout countless recommendations for Justin Fouts. Students on Justin’s floor of Granville Towers remember Justin leaving them cookies with kind notes for their birthday, offering to drive them to the library the night before a test, inviting them to attend church with him when they were seeking a spiritual community on campus, and hours of his time tutoring them in economics and business. Several residents shared Justin’s impact on community by noting that he is a member of their “hall squad,” which is apparent when other see students gathered around him at inner at the Agora or on Franklin Street. Residents also noted connecting with other students and making strong friendships through Justin’s DIY face care night, open mic night, and game nights.

Recognizing Justin's leadership, one student shared that Justin "has worked hard in his classes to keep a remarkable GPA, is involved in many other clubs, co-operates a media company, and performs in a workshop group." Another recalled, "As I write this letter, I am thinking back on the people who have made some of the best impacts on my life. My parents come to mind, as well as some teachers, but none have shown such great compassion, helpfulness, and friendship as Justin Fouts."

### **Junye Ou (Spencer)**

"Junye is a beneficent and selfless friend who puts others' needs above his own. He frequently hosts community events and works tirelessly to prepare them, spending his afternoons brewing teas, cooking apple cider and organizing student life experiences to take our minds off of coursework while bringing residents together who would otherwise never meet. We at Spencer thus owe many of our friendships to Junye. His advice on navigating life's complexities has been especially valuable both for our academics and our mental and physical well-being. Outside of the residence hall, he goes out of his way to approach residents and ask them how they're doing; a simple gesture, but one that can make a huge difference in a person's day. Unlike friends that you part ways with after a course ends, Junye will always remember you and be open to coaching you through the ups and downs of life year after year. Finally, Junye is a role model that all of us residents strive to be like. His diligent work ethic and positive attitude reflect the conviction necessary to thrive at UNC while his empathy and readiness to help others demonstrate how we can better uplift our neighbors both on the local level and on a global scale. No matter what career we are pursuing, these characteristics will help us become more compassionate and successful citizens in the long run. I'm both extremely happy to see Junye graduate but at the same time saddened that he'll go because as long as he is around, every day is a Great Day to be a Tar Heel."