

Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2013

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Our Lady of Visitation

"Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God" means to be kind to others, because you will be rewarded with God's mercy. One of the many times that I have done this is when I include someone with a disability. It seems as if all of the kids with disabilities get treated differently, just because of their disability. People don't always take the time to get to know kids with disabilities and love them for who they are instead of focusing on their disability. I hate seeing this happen to kids, and I hope one day it stops.

One example of a child with a disability that I know is Charlie; one of my best friend's brother. I always here her say how he gets made fun of at school, which truly breaks my heart. I see him almost every weekend when my friend and I hang out, and he is constantly being polite, and nice to me. I will never forget the time I was at their house and when he saw me he smiled and said, "welcome". It was the cutest thing ever.

Another child that I know that doesn't seem to be included often is Mary. She is one of my friend's cousins. Mary has autism, and she doesn't have that many friends. Because of her disability, she doesn't always like being in a group of people. Whenever I am around her, I try to be as nice as I can because I want her to remember me as a nice person. During my friend's birthday, everyone was laughing because she was scared of a fly. I felt bad, so I sat next to her and told her that the fly wasn't going to hurt her. Mary is a kind girl, who is really nice!

Another example is a girl I met while we were visiting my grandparents in Florida. Jess has a handicap that makes her different than everyone else. She has a disability where she can't talk, and her head and brain aren't growing fast enough for her age. She looks and seems much younger than she is. There are other things that kids her age can do, that she can't. Every day when I would go outside to swim in the pool, she would be in the corner, mumbling. One day I decided to go up to her and play with her. She was overjoyed! She was floating on a noodle and I floated next to her and she started smiling. Then I started diving under the water and Jess would laugh so hard as I came above the water. So we kept doing it over and over. Jess loved swimming in the pool. Her grandparents had to force her out of the water to eat lunch and rest. We played in the pool, and the sand. After that day, it was almost a routine to meet up at the pool, and play all day. The weird thing is that I understood what she wanted or didn't want. It was as if we were friends forever. She never spoke to me, but we communicated in our own way. One day, we even went out to eat for breakfast, and it was really fun! The last day, I was so sad because it was the last time we would play. Her grandpa and my mom exchanged emails, so we could keep in touch and try to meet up again! Jess' grandparents kept thanking me for playing with her. They told my parents how special I was for treating Jess like any other friend I would swim with on vacation. I didn't think I was doing anything special. I realized that Jess was different than other kids, but I still wanted to get to know her and play with her.

Even after I haven't seen her in a year, I still vividly remember what she looks, and acts like. I miss her so much, and even though she was just another kid in Florida to most people, she is so much more to me. I won't forget when we told Jess and her grandparents good-bye. Jess was so confused. Even though she couldn't say she was confused, she kept flipping her hand up and down and tilted her head. She wanted me to come swim with her and didn't understand that I was going home.

I don't think it is right for people with disabilities to get made fun of at school, online, or anywhere else because they are just like us; they may just need extra help. Sometimes being with kids with special needs or disabilities, just means you play or communicate differently with them. It doesn't mean that just because they aren't able to talk, walk or understand the same thing as me, we can't have fun together and be friends. I hope by the time I have kids and they grow up to be in grade school or high school, all of the kids will be treated equally.