

Kiwanis Abe Lincoln Scholarship Award
First Place
2004

The American Heritage Dictionary defines adversity as a state of hardship or affliction. The young student I am honored to present to you today has lived in a state of hardship since birth. The simplest task that most of us take for granted is difficult, if not impossible for this student to perform. Yet despite this fact, our First Place Abe Lincoln Scholarship recipient has shown a remarkable spirit, met life's challenges head on, and succeeded in living life to the fullest.

This student has been described as someone who has overcome extreme obstacles and strives to be as independent as possible. The terrific sense of humor, along with strong social skills, makes it easy for others to forget the severe physical challenges faced each day by this student. I know, because when our committee first met the student, everyone was immediately put at ease with the self-confidence, self-assuredness, and humor that came across in the interview.

Another word that comes to mind when describing our scholarship recipient is challenge. The dictionary defines challenge as "a test of one's abilities or resources". Faced with severe physical challenges, this student signed up for Art class. The teacher thought that the drawing skills needed for this class would be very difficult and frustrating to overcome, but this student never complained or made excuses. To the contrary, our scholarship recipient

viewed it as a test of abilities developed since birth and was determined to overcome any barriers created by physical limitations.

This student then approached the Art class instructor, who was also coach of the baseball team, and asked about being a manager. By the way, another definition of challenge is “a call to engage in a contest or competition”. And our scholarship recipient talked about a love of all types of sports. Being a freshman, it was requested by our scholarship recipient to be placed with the freshman team to be with friends. The Coach described this student as being awesome with the duties assigned. It was as if there was another coach around with a positive attitude that helped everybody’s morale during and after the game.

Last year, our scholarship recipient was approached to become a member of the school’s cable television show. In this, our scholarship recipient found a passion for the television medium. Our scholarship recipient is involved in all facets of the cable television show and has developed an excellent relationship with school administrators as well as peer groups through various television activities and presentations. Our scholarship recipient plans to continue this passion for television, media, and creative writing by studying telecommunications in college.

Now let me tell you more of the specific medical challenges our first place Abe Lincoln Scholarship recipient faced. Before he was born, his parents were preparing for his funeral. Doctors had told the family that there was a 99% chance that their son would die at or before birth. But he surprised everyone by entering the World and surviving. In fact he told us in the

interview that when he was born “I just kinda kept on kickin and 18 years later I’m still kickin”.

Because of severe respiratory problems he was placed on a ventilator for two and a half years until he had a tracheotomy that enabled him to breath on his own. Ten surgeries were required before he was five years old and later more surgeries on his back and hips and feet. Recovery was long, and involved homebound school instruction, but his parents say that he never complained.

He found that his high school was not handicap accessible. Through his persistent efforts contacting high school personnel, angled curbs, school ramps, and access to the football stadium and school auditorium were added. It was a victory not only for him but also for many other high school students that attend school in a wheelchair.

Despite his independent spirit (he recently received his driver’s license) he still faces many challenges. He uses a portable word processor to assist him in writing and all of his clothes have to be altered. Even his shoes are specially made for him. And because he cannot bend over, he has to dress himself with the use of dressing sticks.

Even though he has had seventeen surgeries so far, his mother says that he is not a “why me” kid and has never asked “why was I born this way”.

Despite all of this, he has been on the honor roll almost his entire high school career, has been recognized by the Lawrence Exchange Club for

overcoming his disability and for his high integrity, and he has been accepted at Ball State University to study telecommunications.

think that once you meet him, you will understand why his accomplishments and the many challenges he has overcome fit the essence of our scholarship. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the 2004 Kiwanis Abe Lincoln Scholarship Award First Place recipient, Bradley Clark from Lawrence North High School.

Ted Mau

Kiwanis Abe Lincoln Committee

396-2524