



The Community
School

Passages Program



Passages Press

Message from Emanuel

Emanuel Pariser is the co-founder and has been the co-director of the Community School with Dora Lievow for the past thirty-three years. In 1994 Emanuel had an innovative idea of starting a home-based high school diploma program for young parents called the Passages Program. This coming month he will be leaving the school to go back to college full-time. It is difficult to express how much his steady warmth, his quiet humor, his extreme patience, and his unfailing guidance will be missed. Instead of trying, I thought it best for him to say a few words to all of you...

Who could have guessed that when I was 22 and helping to start the Community School, (actually it was called the Sea School at that time), that here I would be at 55 looking back over the past thirty three years scratching my graying hairs (all 550 of them), and trying to think of something to say to the students whom I admire most in the world?

Who could have guessed that as a 55 year old I would be a new parent for a second time with a young child of 23 months old, my little Ya Jia, who was born 11,000 miles away near Pinjiang in the province of Hunan, China.

Who could have guessed that I would have become so enthusiastic about making high school a possibility for young parents in our area – young parents who, like me, are now trying to juggle parenting with work and family and school. Young parents who, without the benefit of much first hand experience, are trying to figure out how to make all these things work: their relationships, their school work, their jobs.

Ladies and gents! My hats are off to you!

I have so much admiration for what you have taken on by coming into the Passages program and trying to do an incredibly arduous and demanding thing – finishing high school while you are growing a family and supporting yourselves.

Personally, I find each day a challenge – from the diaper changes (those are actually overrated as difficult unless the Yaj, as we call her, is putting up a fuss or has a rash), to the small but intense tornado-like temper tantrums, to the decisions about how to handle this or that as we trade between the things we want to do, the things we need to do, and what is best for our children.

It is not in my nature to say good-bye. I stick with things a long time; I get attached. So I have no intention of actually leaving - I am just stepping into another relationship with you all and the Community School. I am hoping to be involved with the Cscool for years to come, and hope that a large part of my own schoolwork at Orono will focus on the kind of learning that you all demonstrate when you take part in this program.

Who could have imagined that some of the people I would come to admire the most would be you – many of whom I don't really know, and haven't known on a personal basis, but whom I feel I know because we are in similar predicaments. I love your strength, your dedication to your children and families, and most of all I love your willingness to grow and learn and take the risks involved in a program like this.

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You are in good hands with Martha and Janet and Andrea, so I am not worried about that, and our new Community School director Helen will add her great experience as well. Although I will stay involved in some ways, I will miss hearing the stories of the challenges you face each day, and how you manage to get through them; I will miss hearing

of the triumphs as well – the Passages completed, the books read. But most of all I will miss the regular reminders you provide for me of the great strength and kindness that abides in all of us. For this I can never thank you enough.

- Emanuel

Letter from A Graduate...

Kylea Odone graduated in January 2005. She lives with her 3-year-old daughter Maia and works for the Monhegan Boat Line.

<http://www.monheganboat.com/>

July 19, 2006

Hey Andrea & Everyone at the Community School,

Everything has been awesome. I am so sorry I haven't been able to catch up. My life has been moving 90 mph for the last year. Things are going so well. This winter, December or January, I will most likely be going to New Orleans to get my captain's license. I can't believe it. It is absolutely crazy. It is something I've dreamed of. I thank you so much for the time we've shared. I totally appreciate the help you gave me. You pushed me to just do it. I really needed that push. Since I graduated, so much has gone so well for me. I'll try to hit Camden soon.

My work days are busy. For example - yesterday:

05:30 am – 08:30

“Elizabeth Anne”
hull cleaning

08:30 am – 12:30

“Captain's Clown”
up river @ Otis Point hooking up floats

13:00 – 14:30

“Elizabeth Anne”
oil change & filters, fuel filters, sea screener

15:00 – 20:30

“Laura B”
unload 120 propane tanks, hoist 6 dumpsters, and steam to Port Clyde; unload & clean & shut down boat.

So that's what my days of work consist of. They tend to be rather busy. I don't do the same things daily, but that is the gist of things. I love my job and Maia has learned to love boats and rope. Maia ties rope to

everything . It is so funny. It is a challenge juggling both Maia and a career. I usually only work four long days a week. She adjusts the best to that.



I feel great. My biggest challenge is teaching and earning the respect of men who are twice my age.

Fortunately, my boss has my side and when and if there are any problems, he reminds them of who's in charge. Soon as I have my license I think most problems will disappear.

- Kylea

Life's Passages



Ashley Coffin gave birth to her sweet daughter Kaylee on August 7, 2006.

Andrianna Benito gave birth to her beautiful baby girl Kaihla on August 10, 2006.

Ashley Luce is beginning college classes at the Thomaston Center of the University of Maine this month. Her goal is to obtain a degree in nursing.



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Careers

by Nicholas J. Halliley

There are many careers I am pondering about pursuing. There is wrestling or sports entertainment. Also, writing movies and books. Maybe acting. I also would like to just own an entertainment business. Finally I want to own my own clothing line. There are many reasons each of these careers are in my mind.

First there is sports entertainment. I personally am too small for the biggest stage in sports entertainment, WWE. That is why I started my own little wrestling organization, XTW. XTW started in 2001 and has had its rises and falls in entertainment and competitors. I love sports entertainment. Although, I would need to work on my physique and speed and mentality if I were to follow my dream of being a WWE Superstar.

Writing is a career I have only just recently wanted to pursue. I have been told that I write well. I *do* need work, however. I have only just finished one rough draft of a story. I have many ideas in my head for movies or wrestling's story lines, but I just don't know how to put them together. So I would probably need to co-write at first just to fully get the hang of it.

Creative writing for sports entertainment (wrestling) would be fun for the most part. I might have a little trouble coming up with ideas for wrestlers who don't interest me. Although, it might be fun to try to make them more appealing to the WWE or TNA audience. I would need to have a BA/BS in film, TV, drama, media studies, communications or the equivalent. If I wanted to write for WWE, I would also need a minimum of three to five years writing and production experience in network television. Creative writing in WWE requires 52 weeks on the road and I must live in or near Stamford, CT. Stamford, CT is where WWE headquarters is. The biggest problem I would have is being plugged into pop culture and trends.

As far as acting goes, I have sort of wanted to be an actor for a while. If I were a sports entertainer, then acting would help me out. If I were

just an actor, then I would want to play the villain mostly. I don't know if I'm quite scary or spooky enough for that, though. I would need to work on my acting a bit and I would definitely have to work on my memory, so I could memorize my lines.

My own entertainment business would send out music, movies, shows and maybe even books. I would like to listen to new artists and be able to sign them under my own record label. Or even own my own radio or television station. I feel it would be a lot of fun to do that. I would need to figure out what the consumer demands are. I would also need to figure out more about each industry I would like my company to be a part of. It would be a lot of work, but also a lot of fun.

Now finally, my own clothing line. I would like to be able to design everything from t-shirts and jeans to suits and ties. Although, I would need to figure out either how to get permission from other companies to put my design on their merchandise or I'd need to figure out how to create my own clothes. I would really like to be able to design something for every type of person. This part of the job would need to involve tons of input and research.

In closing, I don't know exactly what I want to do. I do know however, that any career path I want to take is going to take a lot of hard work and dedication.

Lowdown on Domestic Violence

by Kendra Jameson

Domestic violence is a growing problem involving the beating or infliction of injury, either emotionally or physically, of a wife, child, and/or girlfriend. Men can be victims, too. Domestic violence is recognized now as an antisocial behavior.

Domestic violence is the largest cause of injury to women between the ages of 15-44. Every year 2 million to 4 million victims suffer from domestic violence and at least 2,000 of them will die from their injuries. It's not just spouses abusing

Be Creative With The



Community School

each other and children, children can abuse parents too. *Approximately 900,000 parents are beaten or abused by their children each year!*

Many people stay in an abusive relationship out of fear of what might happen if they leave, how they would support themselves, and feeling that they have no one else to turn to. Many times an abuser will draw their victim away from friends and family in order to control them. This way they have no one to go to, which makes it easier for abusers to get away with abuse. Often the abuser is the main money maker of the family. Money gives them power over the family and is a way of keeping control over the situation, knowing that their victims don't have the means to leave. They might say, "Go ahead and leave if you don't like it," but they know their victims will stay, because they don't have anywhere else to go to and no money to make a change.

The typical abuser has many different traits. They often are in denial so they can feel better about themselves. They don't see any problems with "punishment," because they see it as "deserved." It's never their fault and they blame the victim for "provoking" them so they claim they had no choice. Depression also plays a major role with the abuser, especially if they are frustrated with their jobs or with earning a living, or are unemployed, or have a lot of insecurity. They might be depressed because they were abused as children, and now they are trying to exercise power the way they were taught, by controlling the lives of others. They can act arrogant and like jerks to cover their own insecurities. They act like bullies. They can be very demanding and insulting. The abuser is usually very jealous and overbearing. They claim the victim is their possession rather than a partner, and they can become violent at the slightest loss of control over their victim. They also tend to abuse drugs and alcohol, which they use to cover up guilt and as an excuse for their behavior. They think, "I just wasn't myself, so I had no control over my actions." They also manipulate the partner into feeling guilty for what they have done, or threaten them with suicide if the victim ever leaves them. One place abusing men can go for help is *Time for Change*. They

don't usually go for help on their own, though, because they are too ashamed, in denial, or resisting change. This program is court ordered a lot, especially after repeat offenses.

The abused often feel guilty, because it is easier to blame themselves than others. They think of the "what ifs" and get scared. "What if standing up to it only makes it worse?" "What if he really does commit suicide? I'll be blamed." The victim feels humiliation that it happened to them, so they stay quiet about it, which only furthers the abuse. They are in shock and disbelief at the behavior, but they still make excuses for their abuser, because they don't want to face the facts. Abused people feel anger at the abuser and at themselves, but it can be a useful tool in getting out of the situation. The important thing is for them not to direct the anger at themselves. Often abused people will suffer from greater stress (where little stresses or everyday stresses become huge), muscle tension, headaches, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and nervousness.

The abused can do a lot to help themselves get out of the relationship or prevent abuse from beginning. There are a lot of resources that can provide safety for those wishing to leave. *New Hope for Women* is there to give victims advice and offer safety. Many victims first choose to get a protection order against their abuser. A protective order in Maine restricts contact between victim and abuser to help prevent further abuse, intimidation, and harassment. Depending on the court action, it can also take away the rights for an abuser to own weapons like firearms.

I looked online thoroughly and couldn't find an exact answer to what the penalty for domestic violence was, probably because it all depends on the severity of the case and if it is a repeat offense. I found that in states supporting the death penalty, any person prosecuted for the death of a child under 14 is sentenced to death. Also, health care providers are not allowed to increase premiums for the victim because of more hospital visits and increased health care needs.

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Domestic violence is a growing problem wherever there is poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse, like in Maine. Still, it is a hidden killer, not just of bodies, but minds and spirits, and not just of women and children, but the elderly, too. Abuse is a big problem with both the young and the old, where caregivers can get away with neglect and abuse more easily because the really young and really old are usually more dependent on others for care. Sometimes neglect and abuse is found in institutions like nursing homes (sick I know). Abuse runs in families, because it is a learned behavior. There is an increased chance that an abused child may turn into an adult victim or abuser and that teenagers who abuse their parents will continue to abuse their partners.

This core skill was very informative and I had a great time doing it. It gave me a different outlook on things. Before, I just looked at someone and didn't wonder about things like this being possible. But people hide a lot of things, especially embarrassing things like abuse. I work at Agway and now I wonder how many people that come in and out of the store have suffered from domestic violence. It's sad to think about.

I found it very interesting when researching the different types of abuse, because half of the things they list never really come to mind, especially spiritual abuse. I guess I never really considered it. I never really thought of neglect as a type of abuse either.

While researching this topic I learned how many resources there are out there for victims of domestic violence. I had never realized this because I've never had to look into that type of thing. It's good to know though, if I ever have to deal with this, I'll know who to contact and what my options are.

New Hope for Women 24 hr hotline

1-800-522-3304

The Law Project (for legal help concerning domestic violence & parental rights)

1-800-215-4942

Questions about the War in Iraq

by Shelly Matthews

A piece of history that has meaning to me and to many others is the war with Iraq. I chose this topic because the war is still happening around us and has affected many citizens and families in the United States. The Gulf War started in 1991 after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Kuwait is one of the top oil producing countries in the world and both the US and Iraq wanted to have access to it. After 9/11, the US invaded Afghanistan to try and catch Osama Bin Laden who was responsible for the attack and to destroy the Taliban who harbored and trained the terrorists. These are extremist Muslims, which means they hate anyone who isn't Muslim - like Jews, Christians, and Buddhists. Anyone who isn't a Muslim is said to be an infidel, especially if they are from the "West" which means US and European countries that practice capitalism. Not all Muslims are extremists. Extremists are those that want the whole world to convert to Islam. They think that capitalism is evil.

From 1991 to 1998, and again in 2002, the U.N. nuclear weapons inspectors were searching Iraq for nuclear bombs, which they suspected Saddam Hussein had or was making. But in the end, they found nothing. Still, Bush claims that is one of the reasons that the U.S. went to war with Iraq. Some believe that Bush has an obsession with Saddam Hussein because of what occurred when his father was President during the Gulf War. Bush makes comments such as, "Saddam tried to kill my Dad." Many ask, "Is the US military at war with Iraq because it is necessary to protect our freedom and protect us from terrorism, or is Bush at war overseas only because he is revengeful?" Others think it is really about oil.

I believe this is a rather important issue concerning the families and friends of the soldiers that are over in Iraq defending their country. The soldiers are going over to Iraq with a strong belief the U.S. is in danger, especially after the 9/11 attack at the World Trade Center. It hurts to even begin imagining how the family of a soldier reacts every single time they turn on the television, or hear that

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another soldier died, only to be happy when the news shows a face of another. I do not know how a man or woman could leave knowing that they may never return home. It is devastating to me. It is really devastating to us all not to know for sure what we are fighting for. Are we fighting for oil? Are we fighting for revenge? Are we fighting actual threats of terrorism on American soil or are these exaggerated to make us fearful so we will support the war? Are we fighting for democracy? Or, are we fighting just to show who's boss?

A Citizen's Point of View

by Shelly Matthews

We have government to protect our civil and human rights as stated in the Constitution. US laws apply to everyone who is a US citizen or anyone living in the US. So, for instance, every individual in our country has the right to walk down the street freely and safely anytime they please. We take this right for granted, while other countries like Iraq are still fighting for it. Each person in the US has the right to freedom of speech and religion. We can't be judged because of race or religion, and we can voice our opinions. This is something else that Iraq is fighting for, that we already have as a democracy. A democracy means we can all share in our own government, not have laws forced on us that violate our rights. Another important right we have in a democracy is being able to vote when you reach legal age. Obeying and upholding the law [like paying taxes] is our responsibility and while voting is a guaranteed right, it is also one of our responsibilities.

The Bush Administration

Chief Executive George W. Bush was elected the 43rd President of the US, and was sworn into office on January 20, 2001. He served six years as the 46th Governor of Texas and was the first Governor to be elected to a four-year term in Texas. President Bush's Vice President is Dick Cheney, Secretary of State - Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense - Donald Rumsfeld, the National Security Advisor is Stephen Hadley, and the Secretary of Homeland Security is Michael Chertoff. These are

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members of Bush's Cabinet. There are 15 departments represented in the Cabinet like labor, health, the environment, and education. The heads of these departments are advisors to the President in these different areas.

Bush signed laws and initiatives to improve public schools, requiring accountability, and strengthening local control. His *No Child Left Behind* bill was meant to improve education by giving more money to those schools whose students had better test scores. Maybe this helped teachers to do a better job, or maybe it just made students better test takers. It had the effect of discriminating against poorer schools that didn't have as many educational tools like computers and books, or alternative schools that didn't focus so much on testing and scores [like the Community School]. Some people think it was effective, but others think it was unfair.

Bush signed tax relief to lower taxes. He increased pay and benefits for the American military and is working on saving and strengthening Social Security and Medicare. But the thing that President Bush will most be remembered for is his declaration of war on terrorism. He states "We will not tire, we will not falter, we will not fail."

Impeachment then and now...

I selected a timeline that included the Watergate Scandal, because I did not know anything about the attempts to impeach Nixon. Impeachment means that the person elected as President has to step down from office, because the laws that they have sworn to follow by have been broken. Watergate refers to the building where the Democrats had their headquarters in Washington D.C. The break in and burglary of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters happened on June 17, 1972. I started the timeline with the year 1968, when Nixon was first elected. Two years later, in 1970, Nixon authorized illegal wiretaps in the Watergate building so that he could have heads up on all the gossip and news of his Democratic rivals [Nixon was a Republican]. On October 20, 1972, his council members resigned. In November of 1973 Nixon stated his innocence. But he resigned before he had the chance to be impeached.

The issues raised in Watergate still concern us today. Some people are questioning the government's right to tap our phone lines or investigate our phone records and view our Internet activity, because it is a violation of our right to privacy and freedom of speech. You also have to have a court order to do it. Some people think that Bush's policy breaks the law, and he should be impeached. There is actually a movement right now to have him impeached. To date, only two Presidents have been impeached. The first was Andrew Johnson who was impeached in 1868. The second was Bill Clinton who was impeached in 1998 for perjury and obstruction of justice. Neither was convicted.

Prescription Drug Abuse

by Marianne Skidgel

I believe that someone should find a way to do something about the many people that are snorting prescription drugs to get high. Many people around me are doing it, and it's ridiculous how easy they can get a hold of them. I've never done them so I don't know what one feels like, but I have seen the effects. A person who has been snorting pills seems to lose their sense of control. One person would randomly drop her child because her arms would not function properly. I've seen another person sit in a corner rocking and crying because they couldn't get anything.

The Partnership for a Drug Free America did a study and found that 1 in 5 teens abused prescription drugs. People abuse these drugs because they think they are safe since doctors prescribe them, when in fact they are just as harmful as any illegal drug.

I did an interview with a former drug abuser of prescription pills who has asked to remain anonymous. These are my results:

Q: How old are you?

A: 21

Q: How did you get started in snorting prescription drugs?

A: *At a party, I was drunk and someone asked if I wanted any so I tried it and just kept doing it after that because I liked how it made me feel.*

Q: Why did you do them?

A: *They made me feel "normal," relaxed or energized, depending on what I did, and happy.*

Q: What did you feel when you were on them?

A: *same as question above*

Q: What is the worst thing to ever happen to you while snorting?

A: *Twice I overdosed and passed out and almost died.*

Q: Do you think it's worth doing?

A: *No, because it ruined my life. I fell very far behind on my bills and I never had any money to do anything with my family.*

Q: How much money do you think you've blown on these drugs?

A: *\$20,000 a year*

Q: What advice would you give someone who is wanting to do it or has just started into it?

A: *Don't bother, it isn't worth it in the long run because it will ruin your life and can even kill you.*



Cocaine

by Santa Havener

It caused my life pain

It got to the point I was totally insane

Life was nothing but a fast lane

Now I've got to get pumped full of novacain

Cocaine rotted my teeth away

Now I have to go another day looking this way

I hate feeling like this

Now I'm embarrassed every time we kiss

The cheese

It made me freeze

At the time I was doing it to set my mind at ease

You know that was my excuse

But I'm glad I stopped

Before my heart gave up, splattered, and popped

Cocaine

It's just a head game.

The Great Depression

by Nicholas J. Halliley

One day at a time
I'm going crazy
I am depressed
Although just maybe
It'll all be done soon
My hands are shakey
My mind is racey
My body is quakey

I want some alcohol
But I quit
I'm starting to really
Not give a shit
About anything
I'm getting ready for another fit
All I need is one more
Happy thing to get
I'm tired of life
I'm tired of work
I'm tired of school
I wish I could stick a cork
In my head to end all the pain
I'll even settle for a fork
Then you could cook me
And serve me as pork

I need some friends
True to the heart
Not ones that'll leave me
Whenever they feel it's time for a new start
If I was still at Wal-Mart
Pushing those stupid carts
I wouldn't be here
wanting to part

Bud-Weis-Er
The king of beers
If I get drunk enough

Maybe I'll get hit by a deer
And possibly I
Wouldn't have to be here
To suffer this pain
That's almost too much to bear.

Facing the Unexpected

by Shelly Matthews

Research has proven that your relationship with your child is the foundation of his or her development. There are also times when medication and certain therapies are necessary. I know about this only too well. My son Brandon has a medical diagnosis of Tuberous Sclerosis, seizures, and mental retardation.

The Beginning of A Heartache

Brandon Michael Matthews, was born on June 17, 2002, at approximately 7:03 am. At the age of three months, Brandon began having seizures, although I did not know it at that time. I called Brandon's pediatrician and explained to him what I was seeing happening. Brandon's eyes were rolling up into his head, his body was convulsively moving, and his mouth was moving up and down with saliva foaming at the mouth. The doctor told me not to be alarmed, to just make a follow up appointment with him the next day. He was quite certain it sounded as though Brandon was having infantile spasms, common in small infants. After going to the doctor's office, the doctor still ruled it as a spasm, because he had not seen Brandon have a seizure.

For a week or so afterwards, I made several more appointments, as this so-called infantile spasm was happening every single day and getting worse. I felt as though the doctor was not listening to me, and I was extremely frustrated and angry with the world. Why was this happening to me? Better yet, why was this happening to my beautiful baby boy? He was so young and defenseless. He had done nothing wrong. During my pregnancy, I ate very healthy and took good care of myself physically. I did not drink, smoke, or do any type of drugs, except the prenatal vitamin that the doctor had prescribed. I felt responsible, as though I had let my

son down as a mother, and let myself down as a parent.

The doctor's response made me feel like a hysterical new mother. In September of 2002, I had had enough. It was a Sunday. Brandon had eight seizures that day. I took him to the ER where his doctor was on call. As we were about to be sent home, *without a diagnosis again*, Brandon had another seizure. It was then decided that we should stay and have further testing done. There, the doctor finally witnessed Brandon's seizures. It was after that the words "Tuberous Sclerosis" were first mentioned. I had no idea what that was, so I went onto the Internet and found some very scary information on the disease.

I discovered that it is a rare genetic disorder that affects development and causes seizures. This disease can affect all organs, including: heart, liver, eyes, brain, lungs, you name it. Some people who have TS are diagnosed with severe mental retardation, developmental delay and autism. Others have a milder case. Eighty percent are affected with seizures and this usually begins before two years of age. Finally in April of 2003, Brandon was diagnosed with Tuberous Sclerosis. His diagnosis was based upon evidence of ash leaf spots on the skin, heart tubers, brain tubers, and seizures.

Heartache Defined

Brandon's diagnosis required a series of tests including a brain MRI. At the time of this test, I was frightened, yet I was confident that nothing was going to be wrong with *my* son. I had to think positive, and reassure myself that everything would be okay. I did not have any moral support from anyone, but I had myself and I had Brandon.

During the test I was not allowed to be in the same room as Brandon. This made me nervous and scared that Brandon wouldn't wake from the anesthesia. It just so happened everything went fine. Another series of tests were run. The most difficult was the EKG. Brandon needed to be held down for over an hour, and to this day, I believe that traumatic experience made him uncomfortable with touch.

Why Me? Why Him?

When Brandon was first diagnosed with TS, I thought to myself, where is this going to lead me? Am I going to be able to handle the pressure and responsibility that this illness requires? Do I even want to? I was a single mother with a child who was unexpected. I had not finished high school and did not live in a very stable environment. I thought that I was in love, but in fact, I was in a very abusive relationship for years. I became exhausted with worries and insecurities. I was eighteen and was headed on a path that was leading me nowhere that I wanted to be. I had a son who required a lot of guidance, love, patience, and understanding. I knew that it would take hard work, research, and struggle to get to where I needed to be.

Growth - One Day At a Time

Brandon has been receiving therapy through Waldo County Child Development Services for two years. For a year he received developmental therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy all in the home. Just last summer he started going to the Blue School here in Belfast. It is a behavioral school and the teacher works with Brandon one-on-one with drills every single day. Brandon goes to school five days a week for three hours a day and receives all his therapy there. The Blue School makes out quarterly progress reports that state the goals that Brandon is trying to achieve and the progress he has made.

Brandon does not speak any words. He communicates by saying "mmm" for "more" as well as for "mom" and for "Michael," my boyfriend. Only when he is really upset does he actually say "Mom." When Brandon does not know how to make you understand what he wants, he will jump up and down and get rather frustrated. Michael and I are about the only ones who can figure out his needs. It is trying for both of us.

Brandon has a set of first keys that he has had since birth. He enjoys shaking them, and rarely ever goes anywhere without them. Brandon understands, "Come here," and "Brandon sit down," most of the time. At school, Brandon communicates with a picture of Cheezits. He will hand the picture

to the therapist if he wants one. This is something we will begin doing at home. The reason the picture is of Cheezits is because he absolutely loves them.

In fine motor skills, Brandon is currently working to complete a four-piece puzzle and to place a circle into a shape sorter. In self-help skills, Brandon has mastered eating with a spoon, fork, and is currently working on drinking from a sippy cup. Brandon is very particular with textures of different foods. Most of the time he wants very few foods and is underweight, at 2 percentile, so he drinks one can of Pedisure a day.

Brandon is just beginning to enjoy going outdoors. He does not care to be in direct sunlight; he needs to be in the shade. His favorite thing to do is to watch everyone else by going on long walks in his stroller and taking long car rides.

Brandon has been showing improvement in social awareness. He is doing well with tolerating physical contact through hugs and tickles. Since going to school, Brandon has enjoyed playing with other children. He will laugh, run, and sit with the neighbor's children. He does need time to adjust to different people, but if he likes you, it does not take long to become your friend.

My Frustrations

I absolutely love the improvement in Brandon's behavior since going to the Blue School. He is more attentive and seems to enjoy other's company, whereas before, he was extremely independent and alienated, which can make a person feel unwelcome in his life. It is extremely heartbreaking and overwhelming when Michael and I try to interact with Brandon, but he does not want our interaction.

Some days we just want to scream at the top of our lungs. Not directly towards Brandon, but at his actions. Many times I have had to carry him up to his room and tell him why I need him up there. Sometimes it is because I need time to myself, or because he will not eat anything, or when he screams for a reason that I cannot figure out. It is hard for us to try and guess what may or may not be wrong with him.

One of my goals as a parent is to be strong and keep my head up. I need to remind myself that it is not my fault that Brandon has TS. I need to keep from getting frustrated at others when they continue to ask the same type of questions every single time I see them. One question frequently asked is if Brandon is talking yet. I never would have expected that people would die to know every single day if Brandon was talking yet!

There have been times that I have wanted to shut family members out of my life completely. I was told for many years that Brandon was the way he was because I never held him and never paid any attention to him. I could see why many people would think that, as I rarely ever held my son. The reason I didn't was because he would scream frantically and grab my hair and dig my face just to be let down. Now he likes to be held, but only when *he* wants to be, not necessarily when I want to. For my family member to say that I was neglectful was a huge slap in the face.

Some parents, I would bet, take for granted what their children *can* do. I hear all the time that it would be nice to have a son like Brandon. They do not like the way their children back talk, scream, pull fits in the store, ask for everything in sight, make a huge mess by getting into everything, running away when they are told to do something, or even writing on the walls with whatever they can. *I would just like to say to parents whose children do all of that, be grateful!* Take the time to sit back and laugh about what they do, when normally you would scream. I cannot do that. I have no idea what that is like. Brandon does not even know how to drink from a sippy cup, or eat regular foods because of his texture sensitivity. He cannot go to the park to play on the swings, go swimming, or even know what animals, the sky, trees, or games are. I would just love to be able to play baseball, basketball, and golf with Brandon. I would like to have his pictures professionally done every month, get him new clothes - he has stayed the same weight for two years. I would like to take him to the movies and the zoo every other weekend. I really do not want him to feel loved any less because he is more delayed

than others. I don't think I do things to make him feel that way and I never want to.

Brandon now has a new baby brother, Michael. I am concerned that Brandon will feel left out when his brother continues to grow normally. When I was pregnant with my second son, I told Brandon that "Momma loves you very much, and when your brother is here, you make sure you teach him everything that you know. Momma will spend special time with you both and I will always love you the same." But I know that little Michael will learn to speak and do more activities before Brandon, so I will just need to find a way to involve Brandon in his growth and pray that it will help Brandon grow and develop to the age level he should be at.

The Positive Side of Things

We like to include Brandon in some fun activities at least once a week. Brandon has an activity box that holds quite a few art supplies. I usually help him draw pictures or I will draw something educational and he will color the pictures. There are times that he seems to enjoy and understand what we are doing, and other times he gets angry and frustrated.

Brandon also has an educational box that has many different types of flash cards. We also have several puzzles for him to work on. He has signs on the door that he has to change the cards in everyday. They say things like "today is.. tomorrow will be.. the weather is... tomorrow it will be...." This helps with his eye and hand coordination and it also provides some consistency to our activities.

As soon as little Michael is ready for a schedule, we plan to include Brandon in it, making sure that he will have plenty of our love and attention and not feel excluded. To do this, Michael and I will take turns with each child while doing certain activities. If Michael is at work, and little Michael is sleeping, that will give me the perfect opportunity to include Brandon in a very fun activity.

Thanks Grandma and Pampa Lou

My grandmother Mamie has a huge role in Brandon's life. She tries to take him every weekend,

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so I can have some respite. It has been a godsend to me knowing that someone else in my family loves him just as much as I do. Brandon's eyes light up at the sight of her, and he will smile and giggle uncontrollably when he sees her. Mamie is very proud of Brandon and the things that he can do now; she never asks, "Why can't he do this or that?" and she tells him all the time how wonderful he is and how much he means to her.

Pampa Lou is grandmother's husband. He is an old fashioned man who likes to do things his way. Anything new is suspect, simply not okay in his book. Pampa Lou does not have patience, and when it comes to children, forget it! He will tell you how much of a brat your child is, even when they are doing nothing wrong. Yet, if you are to ask him how he feels about Brandon, he will tell you that Brandon is the best! If someone says otherwise, he invites them to come and talk to him and he'll set them straight! I appreciate his support. He and I do not see eye to eye on a lot of things, but about Brandon we agree that this special little guy is a blessing and we share the hope that he will succeed in life. We are determined to see that he does.

The Book Corner



Lovely Bones

by Alice Sebold

reviewed by Kendra Jameson

Lovely Bones is one of the best books I have ever read. I loved the way Alice Sebold portrayed a tragedy that happens every day and turned it into a novel. The book haunted me until I finished it. I just couldn't stand to put it down! When I wasn't reading it, I was thinking about it and what was going to happen next. I loved how she kept you on the edge of your seat trying to figure out if they would ever find out who killed her or find the rest of her body.

Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold is about a girl struggling with her death and her rape. Susie Salmon was walking home one night and was pulled aside by a man into a small underground hole where he raped and then murdered her. Susie watches her family from heaven grieve and grow apart in the mystery of her death. She watches her younger brother and sister grow up and experience the things she longed to. Susie watches her acquaintances from school obsess over her death and come together to defeat it. I think Lovely Bones is trying to give the message that there is life after death and families can heal and rebuild after a tragic loss like the Salmons.

Alice Sebold wrote the book in such a suspenseful way that you can't help but get involved. I wanted the family to find their answers and to prosecute the killer, but they couldn't. This frustration made me feel as if it was my own sister or daughter that had gone missing and I had no idea what had taken place. I have never felt so involved in a book before.

The most emotional part of the book was reading about what it was like for Susie Salmon to watch her family and friends to grow up without her, and see them experience the things in life she would never have a chance to do. I couldn't imagine what that would be like. A few times in the book I almost broke down and cried because of the pain she must have felt. The saddest thing, though, is that this is something that happens everyday, and you can't just turn your back on it. If every victim wrote a book on this type of experience, we'd probably run out of room for them all. *Families sometimes do have to deal with the heartache of losing a loved one, but it is made worse when there are no answers as to what happened to them.* When they just turn up missing. Could you imagine having your child's elbow brought to you? I don't think I would ever recover from it.

All and all I have nothing bad to say about the book, I thought it was great! I can't wait to start reading the memoir Lucky; I'm hoping it grabs me as much as Lovely Bones. I am never a person to get excited about reading, but now I can't wait to read the next book. I want to understand what

really happened to inspire Alice Sebold to write Lovely Bones.

Catcher In The Rye

by J. D. Salinger

reviewed by Nicholas J. Halliley

The story Catcher In The Rye is a great book about a boy named Holden Caulfield. Holden gets kicked out of school, but his parents won't know for a couple of days and all. So what he does, he decides to go out to a hotel and stay a couple of nights. Throughout his adventure, he meets some strange characters. Everybody from a schoolmate's mother to a pimp and a hooker, a kid rollerskating, two nuns, old "friends" and a piano player. Holden talks about his family a lot. His brother D. B., who's a writer, and how he moved to Hollywood. His other brother Allie, who's dead and all. Lastly, his kid sister Pheobe, whom Holden buys a record for. I feel Holden loves Pheobe the most out of his siblings.

Holden goes through little depressed stages throughout the entire story. Although, he gets his kicks in the story, as well. Usually his way of saying something was funny or amusing is, "That killed me," or "It killed me." If he thought you would find something funny he'd say, "It would kill you." Finally, Holden makes it home to talk to Phoebe and all. He sneaks in to talk to her, and finds out his parents aren't there. He leaves after a while to go to his old teacher's house to spend the night.

Holden then goes to his old teacher's house. Something strange happens while he is there. In the end, Holden has a crazy idea to go out west and just be away from everyone. Then his sister gets mad at him and he stays.

My idea on this novel is it is a great book about life. Not too dramatic, not too wild, it's just life. I think Catcher In The Rye is a very interesting book, because of the emotional exploration of depression and joy. I am looking forward to reading it again someday. Personally, I would recommend this book to anyone, especially people who are going through a tough time. This book really shows how people think in certain situations.

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