

## Abby

“When you judge someone based on their appearance you miss out on their abilities, beauty and uniqueness.”-Sevenly

I had first seen Abby at a restaurant; unknowingly I would soon be working for this family as a nanny. Looking back at that day, I did what every other person at the restaurant did when they saw this large family of four children chaotically find their way to their table to eat, I stared. I began to realize that one of their children was disabled. She had a facial deformity, hearing aids, speech impediment, and seemed to have a difficult time with understanding social interactions. Immediately, all the attention from the restaurant was on this little girl who was trying to enjoy lunch with her family. It was disgusting to see the reaction that was prompted just by a child with special needs.

A month later, I began to work for Abby's family. Getting to know ten-year-old Abby, I learned that her disabilities are not disabilities at all. She is a child with special needs not a special needs child.

However, people cannot see past Abby's disabilities because they do not understand her, or her abilities. I took Abby to the park and watched as little girls gawked at Abby on the playground. She approached these girls and they sat there in silence just staring at her. Abby had asked these girls if they would like to play and the little girls had gotten up and walked away from her without answering her. The girls had walked onto the play set to stare at Abby from a distance as she sat on a piece of equipment with her brother. Not only were the children staring, but also their parents. For me, the hardest part when I am out with Abby is the continuous staring from other people. I cannot imagine what it feels like for her and her family to simply go anywhere and have people stare at them, as if they have something contagiously wrong with them. The nicest, sweetest girl, with the best intentions was rejected by a group of her peers because she was “different”.

Abby is far from different. Her disabilities do not prevent her from being “normal”. This amazing and inspiring little girl is capable of reading, carrying out tasks such as cleaning, and organization, and making people laugh. Abby offers to help me clean the house when she is home from school, a task her brothers wouldn't dare to embrace. She has an incredible sense of self and spirit, which a seldom few have. I have never seen a ten-year-old child with such an ambitious attitude towards life, taking it by the reins. Not only can Abby perform tasks, but also she like anyone else understands human emotions. Her family has provided an environment filled with love and acceptance; she is part of her family included in everything they do, and plays her big sister role better than most.

Abby has developed my understanding of what being a child with special needs is like, she has demonstrated to me that though she has special needs she embraces life to its fullest. The law of life that Abby has taught me is to allow everyone the chance whether it is disability, age, or lifestyle to show me what that person is capable of. Our society today, is so quick to “write off” someone who is disabled as inferior, but people with special needs offer a different perspective on

life, facing more challenges, more prejudice, and more discrimination on a daily bases than the “normal person”.