



**TAYLOR MEYERS**

is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Kenston High School in Bainbridge.

She plays volleyball and enjoys Northeast Ohio winters by snowboarding.

Taylor is interested in a career in the medical field, perhaps as a nurse.

Sometimes words mean more than actions. Discrimination is happening all over the world and there is nothing being done to stop it. What would you do if your friend was being picked on at school because she was fat and didn't have the clothes all the other girls had? Or maybe because she couldn't afford makeup like the other girls wore? Would you do something to stop it? "Just as you have the instinctive natural desire to be happy and overcome suffering, so do all sentient beings; just as you have the right to fulfill this innate aspiration, so do all sentient beings. So on what grounds do you discriminate?" (The Dalai Lama)

Was I even a friend to Ashley\*? For a while I sat back and watched her get verbally abused by the kids at school. Why didn't I stick up for her; I was her friend wasn't I? I would see Ashley in the bathroom crying. She never wanted to do anything about the kids torturing her every day. She told me it was because it would show them she wasn't strong. She really wasn't. "Fat ass, didn't you just wear that shirt yesterday?" Ashley ran into the bathroom. Those kids didn't know what these words were actually doing to her. I sat there watching, still not doing anything. I couldn't take seeing her like this. I waited for her by her locker the next day at school. She never came.

I called Ashley after school. "I'm not coming to school, ever again. I can't deal with what is said to me, and no one is ever there for me. I went home today and my house had been egged; I don't want to come to school anymore; I'm embarrassed, and hurt." I felt like crying; I was her friend just sitting there watching her get abused, watching kids laugh at her. I had to do something about it.

She walked into school this time with me. A kid came up to her and called her fat once again. This time I wasn't just going to watch. "Would you guys wanted to be treated this way, she doesn't deserve this. You guys are mean; leave her alone. Treat everyone else how you would want to be treated." I remember everyone looking at me in amazement. The way Ashley smiled I knew she felt good for the first time in awhile. After that day no one was mean to her and she was able to walk around school with a smile. It felt great to stick up for her. I felt so much better.

Don't just sit back and watch things like this happen. Luckily the ending turned out the way it did, but that's not always the way it happens. Stick up for what you know is right. Treat others how you would want to be treated. We can't stop the past, but we can live and change the present, so in the end the future will be peaceful.

*\*Name has been changed*