



MASON PAVLOS

is a 7th grader at North Olmsted Middle School. He enjoys reading, playing video games, listening to music and being with friends. Mason has an entrepreneurial spirit and wants to run his own business some day. His varied interests may lead to a career in engineering or as a chef.

People are like stars in the night. They all shine differently and look different, but they all are in the same place and they're all the same thing, so why judge them for who they are? Last year in sixth grade, a normal day until my class and I walked down the halls to go to music. Once we got there we all sat down, and the music teacher started talking about our assignment when a boy with Down syndrome raised his hand and asked something. Then these girls giggled because of the way he talked. This got me mad. Then after my friend and I went to one another to be partners, I noticed the girls did too. The girls went to the boy with Down syndrome. His name was Clyde*. They started talking to him and laughing and teasing him. Then I heard Clyde ask if he could work with the girls and they walked away with a giggle. I was mad about what they just did, so my friend and I went to Clyde and asked if he wanted to be in our group. He smiled and said yes.

Clyde can't control the way he looks or acts. That smile told me a lot of things. One of them was that he felt happy to be my friend and I asked him to be in our group. Another is that he made a friend. A final is that he felt good. Then my friend and I smiled back at Clyde and went to work. We got all of our work done faster than most of the class. After that day every time I saw Clyde I would high five him along with my friends. Even now that we're in middle school when I see him I give him a high five. I felt happy about what I did and still do. I'm glad I did not do what those girls did and made friends with Clyde instead. I have had other experiences with people making fun of special needs kids. But now in middle school the special needs kids are on the other side of the building, so maybe this is a good thing because people will not make fun of them.

When people do make fun of special needs kids it makes me feel uneasy. When people make jokes about special needs kids, it's not cool or funny. It is wrong, wrong in so many ways, ways that make kids think less about themselves. It lowers their self-esteem, and maybe in some cases makes them suicidal. Now every time I see things like this happen, I am the one to stick up for the kids being bullied or made fun of. I can tell people why it is wrong to do this to kids or people in general. We're all made in God's image; so why make fun of that image?

**Name has been changed.*