



**AUSTIN RUBINOSKI**

is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Eastern Heights Middle School in Elyria. He likes singing, playing trumpet, and swimming. Austin has also acted in ten plays and has dreams of being an actor or a chef.

It all changed, it was all different, and I didn't think it would happen. We, as people, face many issues in life involving things such as money or jobs or food; that makes it look like a problem such as hate seem like a needle in a haystack, but for some people hate is the haystack and that's how it needs to be treated. When I began middle school hate was one of my biggest problems.

A new school, new teachers, new classes, new pupils—it didn't matter too much in grade school about your physical appearance as long as you got along with the people you were friends with. I tried to bring that along with me, but it didn't work, it all changed. I was one of the shortest and weakest kids in my class making me a prime target for bullies and it happened on a regular basis. "Hey shorty," "Get out of my way small fry", these comments and many other things like name calling, pushing and shoving, and kicking occurred and I endured this form of hate on a weekly basis. I didn't know what to do, it seemed like there was nothing I could do, no one to turn to; I didn't think this would happen. Although, as it seemed as though there was no way out of this endless hate, as I look back now it seems as if one thing, one girl, saved me in a way. Her name was Jennifer\*.

Back in 6th grade Jennifer was never sad, always smiling and when she wasn't, it seemed as though no one else was happy. I met her through some of my friends and sat next to her in social studies; I got to know her real well and through her I started focusing on being happy with what I had and not to focus on the "hate". Of course the hate didn't stop, but I did notice it was gradually decreasing. I think of her now as my globe of light in a dark passageway, she helped me see the light in things I couldn't and I'm glad to have met her.

As the years went on the hate seemed to stop, I didn't get very much taller or stronger, but I learned through Jennifer to stop the hate that affected me and I did. I'm still scared to turn the corner and see the people who bullied me, but I just stop the hate for my own personal good. Our school has created a bullying task force to stop bullying and speak for those who cannot. Jennifer\* is a member of this group and I support her fully, I now think of her as my sister and we are very close and thanks to her I'm a happier person.

Hatred is powerful and takes an even more powerful force to stop it. Although I believe if we all come together, we can all stop the hate.

*\*Name has been changed*