

Hannah K.
Lower Dauphin High School
Third Place
9th -12th grade

Facing Adversity

When was the last time you held a door for someone with a handicap or donated to a charitable organization to benefit people with disabilities? I often think about this. I have always done this, but after Keith Parson's remarkable life experiences, I have become more aware of it.

Our society as a whole has trouble making everyday places compatible with the needs of people with disabilities. Most people do not spend much time thinking about what living with a disability entails, knowing to appropriately communicate with people with disabilities, or what they go through on a daily basis.

The American cyclist, Lance Armstrong, is a great example of perseverance and not letting anything get in the way of accomplishing his dreams. He exemplified perseverance when he had the prestigious honor of winning the Tour de France seven times while overcoming testicular cancer, as well as other cancers. He never once let any of these obstacles get in his way and continued to stay motivated throughout his entire cancer battle. He is now a very well-known person because of his outstanding achievements.

An aspect that has come to my attention after reading Keith's story is gratitude. We don't normally focus on gratitude or thankfulness unless we are put into a situation that makes us realize how fortunate we are. Some people live their lives without thinking about the possibility that their life could be changed in the blink of an eye. Many times this is when a person realizes how grateful they are to have so many blessings in their life, and they begin to turn their life around. I do not look at a disability as a downfall, but as a chance for someone to turn over a new leaf and have a fresh start. If the person was born with a disability and lived with it ever since, that also is a benefit because they will be a stronger individual from the beginning.

Reading Keith Parson's story has enlightened me and given me a better idea of how people with disabilities would like to be treated: just like everyone else, that is, being able to express themselves as a unique individual. Now that I have become more knowledgeable about people facing disabilities, I find myself wanting to go above and beyond to make a difference in their lives. People facing disabilities are truly wonderful people who set a great example for everyone else because they are face with obstacles and life-threatening occurrences on a daily basis, and still have the time to live their lives to the fullest. For some this means using their personal experiences to channel those thoughts towards other people in the hopes of making them better decisionmakers and becoming a more experienced individual.

Keith Parsons did just that; he became a motivational speaker after his life-changing experience and he is now reaching out to the public to speak about making

better choices. He knows firsthand the consequences associated with rash and unbeneficial decisions.