

## The Short Bus Stops at My House

*Written by, Laura Hertzog*

It's funny how the length of the bus you ride has the ability to define you as a person. Personally, I rode the regular sized bus, the one the "normal" students rode to school. However, there was another bus that happened to stop at my house every weekday morning. It was the short bus, "the retard racer", the bus that was transportation for my brother. Yes, my brother rode the short bus and will forever be the root of some kid's immature joke. Or even worse, the root of some adult's joke. My brother is defined by his transportation of getting to school. They look past his ability to smile while making his bed every morning, or him surviving five open heart surgeries before the age of five, or his ability to say "Love you all." It's all looked past because of society's standards of perfection.



Laura and David

Society has its stereotype of perfection for high school students.

And let me tell you, the qualities of Down syndrome do not match our standards of perfection. Slurred speech, trouble writing, slowed motor skills, and noticeable scars are the blunt indicators of the imperfections my brother has that society tells him and our family. His cognitive abilities will never meet education standards. I can remember the day my mom told me my brother did not meet the minimum of the bottom two percent on a standardized test. The anger stays with me today. The test didn't show how far he has progressed from his starting point. It simply just related him to his other peers. He will always need to be in special education, he will always need a para helping him through the school day.

This may be how my brother is viewed in society but I can tell you this is long far how I view my brother. David may be 17 months younger than me but I view him as a role model, someone to impersonate. As I wake up in the morning, worried about if I will have enough time to put on make-up, and what the cafeteria is serving for breakfast, and how hard practice is going to be, and am I going to have someone to sit with at dinner tonight, and how I'm going to have to read 60 pages, and make sure I keep up on social media; not one of those things come as a concern to David. There is something beautiful about his innocence. His worries in life are so minor compared to the average person. His worries consist of grabbing his two favorite toys to bring with to school, making sure he brushes his teeth in the morning, and making sure the channel is tuned into the evening news at six. It's humbling to observe.

I didn't ask for my brother to have Down syndrome, nor did my parents, nor did my brother. However, I know we can all agree David is the reason our family is so strong. It's the reason my mother fights for to uphold human dignity every day. It's the reason for my father's compassion. It's my reason for counting my blessings at night. It's the reason for my sister's generosity. Down syndrome may have put some road blocks in the way, may have caused some eccentric looks from strangers in the crowd, but ultimately Down syndrome has brought my family joy and has redefined perfection for each one of us.

And the short bus stopping at my house was the greatest blessing.

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