



## A Heart That Loves Teaches the Most By: Ivy McCosh

My name is Ivy McCosh. The employee of Niota Elementary School that has made the biggest impact on my life is Mrs. Stephanie Shanahan. She is not an employee at Niota anymore, but the things she has done for my family and me will not be forgotten. She was a very friendly woman who helped with the Special Ed children. My little brother, Levi, was one of the children she assisted. Levi has autism and cannot talk. Mrs. Shanahan was very kind and patient with him when she worked with him.

One of the main things the teachers helped Levi with was speech. Since he can't talk, he uses some sign language, such as "more," "go," and "all done." We also use a GoTalk, which is a device that we place pictures in and add sounds for each picture when he touches it. For example, we have a picture of his drink in one picture window, and when he touches that one, we hear "Drink. I want something to drink." That way we know he's thirsty. Speech is the main thing he has really been assisted on.

There are other things that he needs assistance on, though. He needs assistance with some things dealing with physical fitness. He was born with a clubbed foot, and so he wears braces on his feet to kind of help straighten it out. It does make it slightly harder for him to walk, and when he is assisted on this they just kind of walk with him and exercise with him. I've never watched them help him, but I have heard my mom talk about how he is assisted. No matter how much he needed, Mrs. Shanahan was always patient with him and understanding when he didn't learn something the first time it was taught to him. Since there were other students in the class, he didn't get 24/7 attention, but he got the attention he needed, as did the other children.

Not only was Mrs. Shanahan patient, kind, and loving toward him in the classroom, but to our whole family. It didn't matter where we were, she at least always said "hi." She speaks to us at softball games, restaurants, stores, and anywhere else we may be to this day. You may not understand why all this would be important to me since her kindness was mostly directed toward my brother, so let me explain. Most of the time, people will gawk at Levi because he looks and acts different. They aren't willing to be patient with him or learn why he is the way he is. It has made a huge difference in my life to see someone, especially a teacher, care for Levi like Mrs. Shanahan did. She took the time to get to know him and understand why he can't do some things. I don't get to see that every day. I'm always afraid people will make fun of him. Now I know that isn't always going to be true.

Other than these things, she was such a good friend to my family. I remember her and my mom talking to each other about problems and how understanding she was about everything. Her whole family was just so good to us. I don't think I'll ever forget Mrs. Shanahan. She made such a big difference in my life and was such an amazing person that I don't know how anyone could forget her. She is really, truly amazing.



Lois Preece, Ivy McCosh, Dan Tollett