

## You Are No Different

by Karlie Hudson

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It seems like her legs have a little trouble walking? His hands have some trouble holding a crayon? These are a few of the things I remember about some of my preschool friends at Camden Elementary School. My teacher, Miss Melissa Totty, never made any one of us feel different from the others even though many of my classmates had learning disabilities. As I have grown older and now have a best friend struggle because she is deaf and has Down syndrome, I want to honor Miss Melissa and all special education teachers in our school system for showing me the true meaning of compassion and how to accept others for who they are.



Karlie Hudson and Utrust  
Administrator, Dr. Dan Tollett

Deafness is a condition wherein the ability to detect certain frequencies of sound is completely or partially impaired. My 3 year old friend, Savanna, is an infant who struggles to hear and has just entered into the same preschool program at Camden Elementary School. She has recently undergone surgery where she received a cochlear implant. Savanna's bones in her ears do not vibrate which cause her to be unable to hear sounds. Savanna is not able to talk or hear clear sounds yet. But the special education teachers will be using sign language as one way to start to communicate with her besides facial expressions and body language. The more time they spend with Savanna the more her personality, actions, and activities will grow on them. And the more her classmates will see her just like all other kids but unique. And that is just why special education teachers need to be honored. Savanna's friends will never know or feel like she is different because they keep the learning environment one of compassion and acceptance.

My deaf friend is very sweet and will always be there to give a hug or smile when her friends need one. I feel so honored to have Savanna in my life and know Miss Melissa and the other special education teachers want to honor her and her life by learning to sign to her and others. They have starting learning simple words to help her classmates communicate with her. Without being part of Miss Melissa's preschool class and this deaf little girl in my life, I probably would not have developed the compassion for friends with disabilities and especially deaf people nor be inspired to sign. I know I am a better person since Savanna came into my life. I believe God made her deaf to impact other's lives and because he makes all things beautiful. I believe God gave Miss Melissa and special education teachers the gift to accept children for who they are. If Savanna could speak to her class today, I believe her words to live by would be; I can do all things through Christ who strengths me. Philippians 4:13. Miss Melissa always shared words that kept us all encouraged and showed everyone what they were good at which made you feel

special and unique. I always felt like I could learn while sitting by a student with a disability as well as learn *from* the student with a disability.

So maybe the next time you see a hearing impaired person you can't sign to, be sure to give them a smile, because that is one language we can all understand. I can hear Miss Melissa say "Remember all kids are unique and special". Miss Melissa Totty is not the type of teacher that does ot just say it ~ most importantly, you feel it.

So this is written to honor Miss Melissa Totty and all special education teachers in Benton County.