

Eighth Grade Graduation Address 2012

Congratulations for starting on the road to success! I am near you. I share your plight and your struggles and your frustrations, but I also share your victories. Often I would be discouraged from achieving because people looked at my rebellious body and judged me as inferior or incompetent. The best understanding begins with sharing life.

When a child is born to die, he feels as if his world is set against him. I must struggle against things that can never be fixed, as do each of you. Everyone else seems to have life with more advantages. I overcame the feeling that everybody had it better than I did. With little vision and hearing, I try to do the simple tasks of everyday life, but I make a mess. My brain and muscles take turns rebelling against each other. What is worse is not having my own voice. I found myself in a prison bound by chains of illness and an uncertain future.

Do you find yourself asleep and hungering in a similar prison? I believe writing will open that prison for you as it did for me. If you can move any part of your body you can talk and you can write. Your communication is a gift to the world. I will tell you how it started for me.

My talking began with body language, how I naturally responded to other's voices and actions. My family taught me the language of the hands, but my hands could not talk back. Teachers introduced picture symbols, and programmed devices to speak for me. I came to understand that the silent voice and thoughts in my head could be seen in symbols called letters and they could be heard in words. I started by drumming and banging on a keyboard and listening to the voice of the computer reading back what I hit. Mom printed my experiment out, and from that moment I was a published author.

Knowing how to say, "I love you" to my mom and dad gave me cause to keep trying. They hoped for the best and were not sad for me. This encouraged me the most. They treated me as a normal person.

Do not be undone by your disabilities, but rather touch others around you with your courage and determination to do more than just dreaming the impossible dream. All things are possible with God. God brings strength out of weakness. That is what life is all about. God has to be the center of everything I do, for He watches out for me and cares for me. We have opportunity to take this power of God as a witness before our country and the world.

Yes, you are hedged in by a body that does not function like it was designed, so that you can only do certain things. You only do those things that you develop as necessary and have value; your life is not wasted on useless pursuits and actions. But do not worry about this or about having someone care for you. God does not make mistakes. It gives others the opportunity to be like God in intensely caring for those who cannot help themselves and have little strength. You are a gift to people to learn experientially the most important lessons of life. You can ask yourself if you are willing to laying down your life and accepting the path you have been given. You are a gift and your words can be a gift to all who have ears to listen.

I have dedicated my life to helping those who have no voice. I can teach by telling my story. Time is running down; I have just a little time to get it right. The physical shell of my flesh will be gone someday, but the spiritual things will last forever. Really, I am ahead by what God is teaching me through my disabilities, which is to trust and rely on Him totally. The character image of my creation will be with me forever, so that one day I can practice fully my dream and what God has done for all men by bringing strength out of weakness.

Little things add up to big differences. If you do not want people to give up on you, then you must not give up on them. Keep trying and trying because it does make a difference. Most people do not know how smart you are until you show them a good attitude of hungering for knowledge.

I did not like strangers working with me because they would do boring things such as colors and shapes. They thought I could not learn and that I was not ready to talk because of my many disabilities. For example, I did not like children's fiction books about so much nonsense, though I do like a good mystery. I wanted to learn about the real world and the reality of the laws of the universe. Mom understood my hunger. She would give me things that challenged my mind because she believed I could learn.

My whole family helped my life to be written on a different page. Dad saw through my difficulties and carried my burden upon his shoulders, for he took me places even up mountains. He is a hero of heroes. My brothers have each been my support at certain times, but it is my sister who has been the awesome caregiver. She knows my body language and the language of my hands. The music of my life is being composed of each of them and special teachers and friends that God has provided. Without my family and friends my prison would remain locked in darkness.

I pray you will this day believe you can walk forward with vision and hope of a successful life, filled with meaning and accomplishment. Interesting things happen when God becomes your strength. To live is to hope. My hope for you is to have an awesome life.

Thank you for giving me the honor of speaking to you today.

Matthew Andreas Wulf