

“When you do something noble and beautiful and nobody noticed, do not be sad. For the sun every morning is a beautiful spectacle and yet most of the audience still sleeps.” This quote by John Lennon speaks true of my life. For a large portion of my life I felt like no one noticed anything I did and I was at a point of not really caring either. That all changed when I chose to attend Minnesota Valley Area Learning Center in Montevideo. I Sam Roth have had quite the educational journey. From Bullied and put down to being well liked and respected by my peers. This speech I hope sums it up for you.

I started in preschool at Madison Elementary. I attended school at Madison Elementary until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. At this school I did not have any trouble with being bullied. I was accepted and the teachers were okay. When I was about 6 years old, my parents split up. Because of this I moved to Becker Minnesota. I attended there from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. While I was there I was bullied, pushed around and treated like crap. The other kids saw me as just some fat white kid from a small town. They all seemed to have money and friends which I didn't have. Becker was much larger than my little town of Madison and I just didn't seem to fit in. The only people who didn't bully me were the teachers. However, they didn't really protect me or try to help me solve the problem either. Maybe they didn't see because the school district was so large and could not see or have time to deal with it. It was hard for me to connect to anyone, adults or kids.

Also during this time I was dealing with the issue of my parents split. We had to drive every other weekend 3 hours there and 3 hours back to see my dad. Being two different places on weekends made it difficult to have friends in either place. Plus the drive took up time that I could have spent relaxing or studying. I was often tired on Mondays which also didn't help at school. This was also tough on my emotions. My parents are good people and support me but they couldn't really help me with the school situation. To complicate things

my Mom's boyfriend or fiancé or husband or whatever you want to call him, was a jerk. He treated me, my brothers and my mom very unfairly and harshly. So not only did I not feel safe at school, I didn't feel safe at home.

Finally, my mother got fed up and left because she realized he was no good for us and causing us more pain than anything. We moved back to Madison when I was in junior high. In some ways things got better. I was back with my friends and in a smaller school system where I was more comfortable. I started playing football and felt more a part of the school. However, there were other kids that bullied me and my friends. I got sick of it and hit a kid. I got in big trouble with that. After that some things were better. I was still behind academically and I didn't feel the teachers cared. Some of them were actually mean to me. At the same time, my parents were still not getting along. I was glad that I could just walk over to my dad's and not have a 3 hour drive, but it also led to more fighting since they were in the same town.

In September of 2008, I found out my dad was being deployed to Iraq. He left April of 2009 and was gone for a year and two months. It was a difficult and scary time. The only people who had time for me were my grandmother and sometimes my mother. My grandmother's house was like a second home to me. I spent some nights there and even a few weeks during the school year while my mother was in school to become a nurse. I spent a year of holidays without my dad and most of my family. Again, I didn't get any support from school.

My dad got back from Iraq, which was good but then one of the saddest events of my life happened. My Grandmother died. I had depended on her so much and then she was gone. During the next year, I just shut down. I got angry a lot. I wasn't very nice to my friends. I got into fights. I didn't do any schoolwork which made me even farther behind academically.

In order to get caught up I attended summer schools at the Mn River Valley ALC in 2011, things began to change. Everybody loved me, and I loved everybody. All of a sudden I wanted to learn and get my school work done. It was like Woodstock in the 1960s. I felt like I had come home and there were good vibrations all around. Fall of 2011, I started attending the ALC full time. I had hope and plans for the future. I have a goal to become an executive producer in the music industry and I have had the opportunity to explore that career. I am improving my math and reading skills. I have lots of friends and am considered a leader at the school. The teachers are kind and caring. I feel they really want the best for me. They are willing to listen and to help with whatever I need. The other students may have their issues but we all try to help each other. Even my family life is better, my mom and dad tolerate each other. They are proud of me. Because school is going so well, I have a more positive attitude which makes everything better.

My Maap Stars experience was the best ever. In the school year of 2014-2015 I decided I wanted to run for the position of MAAP Stars state officer. I ended up winning in the election which 4 years ago i wouldn't have even had the guts to speak in front of that many students. Throughout my experience I had met numerous other people that were just like me in a way. I felt as if I was top dog, as if we were all top dogs on the top of the food chain because of our close bond that had formed in just a few minutes. Now that I am a senior and very close to graduation I have realized that overall my high school experience was the best it ever could have been and i thank my teachers, my peers, and my parents for this amazing run in high school at the Minnesota Valley Area Learning Center.