

Many at Pines had impact on autistic son

Dear Editor:

On April 19, 2003, I met my soon-to-be wife, Amy. About a week later I also met my soon-to-be son, Jonah, who was at that time only 4 years old.

Working a job, attending school full time and being a single parent of a 4-year-old autistic boy is no easy task, but Amy persevered in the face of adversity, matter of fact, they both did. And it was shortly after meeting them that I knew that this was the start of my family. Apparently, Jonah did too because only a few months later he started to call me Dad. It is strange that an autistic boy with such a limited vocabulary at such a young age would say that without prompting. It was obviously a sign.

Twelve years have passed since that first meeting and with four more children added to our family, it was over this past weekend our oldest boy, Jonah, attended his junior prom at Northland Pines High School. His classmates even elected him to be on the prom court, something that would have been unheard of when I was in high school.

Looking back through all of the obstacles we faced, we never gave up on him and always expected him to hold a higher standard, as we do with all of our children. We knew that autism was a reason for the behavioral issues and the learning difficulties, but we never allowed it to be an excuse.

In society now, it seems that people would rather come up with excuses rather than buckle down and work through it. And while I know that a portion of it is because of our work ethic and take-no-excuses attitude toward life, I also know that it would not have been possible for him without the help of his classmates, his teachers and certain members of the community.

It was indeed a proud moment for Amy and me to see him be a part of that. And perhaps the proudest moments came after the ceremony. To

see the people he has worked with over the years come up to him and give him that encouragement made it evident that we have some great people here. We are truly blessed to be a part of this area.

I would like to publicly recognize those who have made such a great impact on his life by working with and helping him, as well as us, throughout the years: Don Anderson, Tim and Tammy Bogeman, Jessica Chuckel, Lou Deditz, Kathy Huebner, Jeff Janssen, Kather-

ine Maney, the late Wilma Plude, Carol Pluedeman, Emily Rhode and Dr. Mike Richie. I know that I am forgetting some of you and I apologize. You know who you are and thank you.

I would also like to recognize his class. You accepted him, helped him and supported him. It is wonderful to see such a great group of young adults. I would also like to recognize Jonah's classmate, Conner, for your kind words after the ceremony. Your words meant a lot

to my wife and me. Your parents should be proud of the great young man whom they are raising.

Tim Stolar
Sugar Camp