

MAKING A CHOICE

You never know how the smallest act of kindness can touch someone else. You make the choice. My question to all of you is: Would you have made the same choice?

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves learning disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question.

"When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?" The audience was stilled by the query. The father continued. "I believe, that when a child like Shay comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes, in the way other people treat that child." Then he told the following story:

Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?" Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging. Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and, getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning." In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the outfield. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat. At this juncture, let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible 'cause Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball. However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least be able to make contact. The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and turned and threw the ball on a high arc to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, "Shay, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shay ever made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!" By the time Shay rounded first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions and intentionally threw the ball high and far over the

third-baseman's head. Shay ran toward second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases toward home. Shay reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base, and shouted, "Run to third!" As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams were screaming, "Shay, run home!" Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the "grand slam" and won the game for his team. "That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world."

I believe that everyone has the ability to make a difference. We have numerous opportunities every single day to help realize the "natural order of things." So many seemingly trivial interactions between people present us with a choice. Do we pass along a little spark of love and humanity or do we pass up that opportunity, and leave the world a little bit colder in the process?

The End

What choice will you make?

1. Will you forget what you have just read and do nothing?
2. Will you consider passing along a spark of love and humanity?

Not all of us have the opportunity to be in a position to invite Shay or the many like him to step onto the playing field. However, we can do the next best thing. We can all make a small donation to the charity of our choice through the Maryland Charity Campaign and by doing so we help to restore the natural order of things. We help those less fortunate to feel whole. Our act of kindness will instill a sense of pride, dignity and purpose to those less fortunate. Your act of kindness can bring hope to those who felt there was no hope.

Please consider a donation to the Maryland Charity Campaign, because we are all connected.