

Rushing to the Rescue

Washington, USA

by Linda Witham

There's a boy in my son's eight grade class everyone thinks is a bad kid. I've heard he talks loudly, disrupts the class with bursts of negative comments, and doesn't participate in groups. He also stands out as the tallest, with the most mature body.

Other parents tell his mother they're scared of him. Yet he's never been physically aggressive. In fact, he's hypersensitive to touch.

I'll call him "Joe". Most parents and kids don't know Joe has Asperger's Syndrome. People with Asperger's must learn about socially appropriate behaviors, somehow their brains don't have it wired in like most of us.

It's very hard for Joe to regulate his social behavior. He's worked hard since second grade. He has friends who support him with cues and comments, and has come a long way.

Joe's in the highest-level math and reading classes. He wants to be on a school activity committee, but parent volunteers refuse him. They don't know he realizes he's an outcast, and works hard fit into the school's social networks.

I wish those parents had seen Joe walking home from school one cold winter day in January 2007. Driving by, I saw him run and kneel down by a little girl lying on the ground.

Joe brushed hair from her eyes and smiled. She smiled back through tears, having slipped and fallen on the ice. Joe took off his coat and spread it out, then helped her move to sit on it.

He gathered her belongings from four feet away, putting them by her on his coat. He wiped snow from her knees and hands, turning her hands front and back to check for injury. He helped put her hat back on.

Then he helped her up, took her hand and walked her home. He carried her pack, then rang her doorbell. Her sister rushed her inside, but the little girl smiled back at Joe. He set her pack down by the door, and walked home smiling.

I stopped by Joe's house later. I asked to talk to him and his mother looked worried. When I said, I want to compliment him, she looked so relieved.

I told Joe that I'd seen him help a little girl today, and that I didn't get out of my car because he had everything under control. I told him he handled the emergency perfectly and I thought he was a hero. I saw Joe's beautiful smile again.

His mom cried as she showed me to the door. We stepped outside and she sobbed because it was so rare for Joe to show compassion and to be acknowledged in a positive way. I cried because Joe's mother worries so much about his future and the challenges he faces from society.

We cried together for all the "adults" in Joes' life who assume he's a bad kid. Please, take today to look at a "bad kid" a little differently, and somehow acknowledge the good in them. It means so much.

Source: HeroicStories.com