

Volume 1, Issue 2

FEBRUARY 2010



BECOMING YOUR BEST

Stories Of Hope And Encouragement About Individuals With Disabilities

Becoming Your Best Newsletter

Welcome to our second newsletter!

For those of you who are new to our newsletter, we are dedicated to presenting inspiring stories of hope and encouragement about individuals with disabilities. We trust it will be uplifting to you.

I was watching the news during the Christmas holidays. I happened to see part of a news clip about a young lady with Down Syndrome. She had won first place in a local contest with her spicy chili recipe. I was interested in finding out more about this young lady. I was able to locate a great story about her on the internet. It had been written on December 21, 2009, by Leslie Richardson, who is a staff writer with the republican-herald.com. Our first story is about Christine Elliott and what happened as a result of her spicy chili recipe.

Perfection at the Plate is our second story this month.

If you are like me, you probably receive e-mail from friends that contain beautiful or cute pictures, interesting video clips, and stories that can touch the heart. I recently received an e-mail from a friend that contained such a story.

I had actually read the story before and you may have seen it as well. It has been forwarded through e-mail and posted on many websites. It is one of those stories that almost sounds too good to be true.

Evidently, this story is a true story. It has been attributed to Rabbi Paysach Krohn. It is entitled Perfection at the Plate and appears in his book, Echoes of the Maggid, published in 1999.

We would appreciate it if you would share this newsletter with others. Please help support our effort by sending your inspiring stories about individuals with disabilities to the following e-mail address: stories@becomingyourbest.com.

To subscribe to our FREE newsletter, please send an e-mail to: newsletter@becomingyourbest.com.

Mission:

We are dedicated to presenting inspiring stories of hope and encouragement about individuals with disabilities.

These stories of success are meant to provide support and the keys to "Becoming Your Best!"

Thank you for your stories and your support!

Chili Recipe Stirs Up Job for Auburn Woman with Down Syndrome

By Leslie Richardson (Staff Writer, lrichardson@republicanhearld.com) 12-21-09

An Auburn woman's chili recipe has stirred up a job for her.

The 3C's Family Restaurant, Port Clinton, was impressed enough with Christine Elliott, 19, that it gave her a position on its staff—provided she bring her recipe with her.

Elliott, who has Down Syndrome, has been working two days a week for two months at the eatery, learning everything she can about the restaurant business, while at the same time prepping the ingredients for her spicy chili, which took first place at the 2006 Schuylkill County Fair.

"It's been fun," Brian Crouse, restaurant manager said. "Everyone needs to learn to interact with all kinds of people and she helps us as much as we help her. She is such a fun person and we all get along great in the kitchen."

Elliott has a job mentor, Debbie Sinkovich, an employment specialist with AHEDD, based in Pottsville. AHEDD is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1977 to serve as a catalyst in the employment and development of people with disabilities.

"We are working on a system for Chrissy to get her faster," Sinkovich said. Sinkovich will be available to Elliott as long as it takes to get her up to speed.

According to restaurant owner David B. Crouse, Elliott is a fast learner. "No matter what we ask her to do, wash dishes, bus tables, whatever, she picks up quickly," Crouse said. "And she is such a positive and big-hearted person - she is a real shot in the arm for us."

Brian Crouse agreed, saying, "She has everything we showed her so far down pat."

Elliott graduated last year from Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29.

"I can't say enough about the IU," Elliott's mother, Mary Ellen Miller, said. "She did so well in the program there and her teachers were so wonderful. She has learned so many skills."

Miller said Elliott attended a weeklong job preparation class held at Schuylkill Training and Technology's North Campus for the past three years and that program also helped her land a job. She was taught how to fill out a job application, how to dress for and what to say on a job interview and other skills used to gain employment.

Through AHEDD, Elliott learned what opportunities were available to her and what type of job she should be looking for based on her skills and interests. "I like to cook," Elliott said. "I like to help my mom bake cookies and do other things in the kitchen."

The AHEDD staff capitalized on Elliott's interest and matched her with Crouse, who was willing to take her on as part of the restaurant staff. "It was a combination of her personality and skills that led us to agree to take her on. Of course, her chili recipe was also a draw," Crouse said. Crouse said he has helped other agencies in the past with job shadowing but this is the first time that he has employed someone from AHEDD.



Christine Elliott, who has Down Syndrome, cooks ground beef while making her award-winning chili in the kitchen at 3C's Family Restaurant, Port Clinton. Nick Meyer/photo

Continuation of Chili Recipe

"I am hoping that other parents of children like Christine will see this and know that there are so many opportunities out there," Miller said. "My hope is that she will learn a skill and be able to eventually live on her own or with a roommate under the right supervision. I want to know she will have something in the future."

Elliott's chili is served at 3C's Family Restaurant on Wednesdays. You can get a taste of the award winning fare by the cup, bowl or in a southwest tortilla bowl.

Crouse said customers have a choice between the restaurant's sweeter variety and Elliott's spicier version. "They are different enough that they don't compete with each other," Crouse said.



Please note that this article was originally published on December 21, 2009, on the www.republicanherald.com website, by Leslie Richardson. She is a staff writer for the Republican Herald. Nick Meyer, staff photographer for the Republican Herald, took the pictures for this story. We would like to thank Leslie, Nick, and the Republican Herald for their permission to use this story.

Christine Elliott prepares to open cans of tomatoes for her dish in the kitchen at 3C's Family Restaurant, Port Clinton.

Nick Meyer/photo

PREMIERING ON HBO ON FEBRUARY 6, 2010 AT 8:00 P.M. (EST)

TEMPLE GRANDIN - Innovator, Author, Activist, Autistic

HBO Films presents a movie about the life of Temple Grandin. Temple was diagnosed with autism at an early age. She has written several books, among which [Thinking in Pictures My Life with Autism](#) is well known. Check listings with your local cable company for other viewings of this wonderful movie. It is a "don't miss" experience.

PERFECTION AT THE PLATE — ATTRIBUTED TO RABBI PAYSACH KROHN

In Brooklyn, New York, Chush is a school that caters to children with learning disabilities. Some children remain in Chush for their entire school career while others can transfer into conventional schools. At a Chush fund-raising dinner, the father of a Chush child delivered a speech that will always be remembered by all who attended.

After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish and stilled by the piercing query. "I believe," the father answered, "that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child."

(CONTINUED TO THE NEXT PAGE)

Continuation of Perfection at the Plate

He then told them the following story about his son Shaya:

One afternoon, Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys whom Shaya knew were playing baseball. Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?"

Shaya's father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya's father understood that if his son was chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging. Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We are 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 up to bat in the ninth inning."

Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning Shaya's team scored again and now, with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat. Everyone knew that it was all but impossible because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it.

However, as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact. The first pitch came and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates came up to Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch.

The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya. As the pitch came in, Shaya and his teammate swung at the ball and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shaya would have been out and that would have ended the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman. Everyone stared yelling, "Shaya, run to first. Run to first." Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman who would tag out the still running Shaya.

But the right fielder understood what the pitcher's intentions were so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman's head. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second." Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third." As Shaya rounded third the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home." Shaya ran home, stepped on the home plate and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "those 18 boys reached their level of God's perfection."