



KRISTI'S STORY

Nora L. Davis, TxP2P Parent Volunteer

Parents of children with special health care needs think and see life differently. The dreams and expectations that we have for our children are different than those of parents with typically developing children. We learn to accept and believe that our children will live a life with limits. Certain achievements are not expected or even imagined. The world rotates differently for us. In Kristi's Story, this belief of a world with limits did not exist for her at least for one week.

Kristi Lynn Davis is an eighteen year old senior at Hebbronville High School in Hebbronville, TX. Kristi has been diagnosed with Autism, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Delayed Speech, Mental Retardation and Hemiplegic Cerebral Palsy. Kristi can understand some of what is told to her, but her ability to verbalize is extremely limited. She communicates in single words or directs you to what she wants or needs. Her life consists of school and family. She enjoys going to school and participating in activities such as bowling and track with Special Olympics. Kristi loves school so much that she is never happy to hear that there is no school due to holidays, spring break or summer.

At Hebbronville High School, girls from the senior class are eligible to be nominated as Senior Class Representatives and run for Homecoming Queen. The senior class is given a ballot with the names of all the girls in the senior class. Only seniors are allowed to vote and the top four with the most votes are the representatives that compete for Homecoming Queen. I was at high school the day the announcement was made about the four girls who would be representing the senior class for Homecoming this year. I was overcome with surprise and emotion when I heard Kristi's name announced. I could not believe what I had heard. Kristi had fulfilled a milestone that was not thought of for her. Keep in mind Kristi's social life is limited to time with her family and attending respite and summer camps.

I came home ecstatic and gathered our family members to inform them that Kristi had been elected by the senior class as one of the nominees vying for the title of

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Homecoming Queen and she was going to need all our support to help her get it done. Everyone was so excited and happy for Kristi. None of us had ever imagined this was possible.

Not much time had passed before the parents of the senior representatives had a meeting with the school principal. The parents were informed of the rules and requirements. The information consisted from decorating to participating in Homecoming activities. Before I could begin to sort my thoughts on how to decorate and campaign, I had to put my thoughts together on how to explain to Kristi what she was being challenged with. I explained to her that she was running for Homecoming Queen and that she was going to have to do some things differently at school for this event. Keep in mind that routine is important for Kristi due to her Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). It's hard to know how much Kristi actually understands, but I knew that she understood this event would be leading to something special and most of all, she would be getting attention. Kristi loves and enjoys being the center of attention. She's also a fashionable girl that loves looking pretty and getting all dressed up.

The theme for Homecoming week was "Let's be Electrifying." The school was decorated and each day the students were allowed to dress up according to the theme of that particular day. Monday was "Black Madness", Tuesday was "Neon Day", Wednesday was "Western", Thursday was "Black and Gold" (school colors) and Friday was "Dress Up". Kristi enjoys dressing up and gladly participated each day. I think her favorite day was Neon Tuesday. She wore neon green leggings with a blue jean skirt and a neon green top with plenty of "bling". She accessorized with huge neon pink earrings and neon extensions in her hair. Her sequenced pink tennis shoes definitely stood out. She looked adorable! Throughout the week the candidates were responsible for passing out campaign stickers to the students. Students from every grade level helped Kristi pass hers out. The students were very supportive of her and her needs. I feel these students helped instill confidence in Kristi and allowed her to feel that she was a special part of the student body. Thursday was Election Day and the students voted for their choice for queen. The Homecoming Parade also took place that evening. The four representatives rode together on a float and threw candy to the audience along the parade route. The girls looked darling!

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Friday finally arrived; the four representatives were seated on a platform at the football game looking glamorous in their beautiful long dresses with smashing hairdos and makeup until halftime when the ceremony was to take place. The representatives were escorted by their fathers and presented in front of the crowd. Each waited patiently for the big announcement, I knew regardless of the outcome, it had been a great week for Kristi and had already accomplished something I had never dreamed for her. Finally the announcer says, "The moment we all have been waiting for. The 2011 Homecoming Queen for Hebbronville High School is Kristi Lynn Davis!!" Oh my, she did it!!! The entire audience stood up for a grand ovation and cheered. Family and friends were crying and applauding. We were all beside ourselves with pride and joy. Kristi had been crowned Homecoming Queen! You could see the joy on her face. Her smile spoke volumes. She took pictures with anybody that wanted a picture and gave kisses and hugs to all. Kristi had accomplished something that we never had imagined possible. This success was due to the support and compassion of the student body of Hebbronville High School. They allowed her an honor that is so special and meaningful. Through their kindness and understanding, Kristi had an experience that will be hard to top for the rest of her life. This will be a moment of a lifetime that will never be forgotten and is greatly appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge the other class representatives: Theresa Garcia, Betina Maldonado, and Kasey Sorrells. These are exceptional young ladies and we are eternally grateful to them for being great friends to Kristi and helping her throughout this event.

As a parent of a child with special health care needs, this event was quite overwhelming and unexpected. We never imagined that this would happen for Kristi. To see the joy in her eyes and in her smile was one the greatest blessings that we could experience as a family. For one week Kristi was a different kind of "special." If you ask Kristi about her experience she proudly claims, "I am the queen" with an instant smile.

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