



Catholic Central Speech Contest Winner : Sydney Yontz



School Speech Contest Winner (pictured): Sydney Yontz (11 years old, 5th grade) with her 2 year old sister Lacey Yontz.

Can you think of a time when volunteers made a difference? The fifth and sixth graders at Catholic Central Elementary can. Every year, these students participate in the Modern Woodmen Speech Contest. With support from their teachers, Christina Monnin and Elise Balaj, each student chooses the focus for their speech from the topic and begins to research. After gathering their facts, they begin to write a 3-5 minute speech to present in front of their class. Not only are students graded on the content and word choice, but also on their presentation of the speech: eye contact, tempo, volume, confidence, and posture.

Once everyone presents at the class level, the top speeches in each homeroom are chosen

to compete in the school contest. This year, we had six top students: Mia Galluch, Jenna Samosky, Lizzy Lohnes, Sy Roth, Sydney Yontz, and Ethan Spracklen.

On April 20, the school gathered to witness this event. Speaking only from memory, each student presented their speech. The topics ranged from volunteers who helped clean up during the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 to those who volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. After the judges tallied up the scores, the winners are announced. Sydney Yontz was named the first place winner, Lizzy Lohnes came in second, and Jenna Samosky placed third.

These students received an award, and their names will be printed on our school plaque displayed

in our awards case. Traditionally, the winner of the school contest will go on to compete in the district contest. Unfortunately, due to the lack of participation in our area, Sydney was unable to move to this level.

If you asked Sydney where she got the inspiration for her speech, she would say from her sister and the Buddy Walk. The Buddy Walk is an event that started in 1995 by the National Down Syndrome Society to celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October and to promote acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome. This especially hits home for Sydney and her family because her sister was born with this disability. Sydney captivated the audience with her passion for

the topic and compassion for her sister.

Speech Topic: A time when volunteers made a difference.

By: Sydney Yontz
Have you heard of Down syndrome? I learned about Down syndrome nine months ago, when my parents told my sister and me about our 2 year old baby sister, Lacey. When she was born my parents never told us that she had Down syndrome. I knew she had to go to a doctor and have therapy a lot, but I just thought something was wrong with her heart. When my parents sat my sister and me down to explain it to us, they told us that she had Down syndrome, which meant she had an extra chromosome, and that she may be slow to learn things like walking, talking, and reading. The easiest way to explain Down syndrome is to say my sister was born with 47 chromosomes instead of 46 like me. She has 3 copies of her 21st chromosome. I only have 2.

The Buddy Walk is a group that is working to bring awareness about Down syndrome to the public. The Buddy Walk was started in 1995 by the National Down Syndrome Society to raise awareness and acceptance for people with Down syndrome. The Buddy Walk is organized by volunteers. These volunteers get people in-

involved to walk, raise money, and raise awareness about Down syndrome. These people do not get paid any money to do this. The satisfaction of seeing all the smiling faces from the children and adults during the event.

My mom's friend, Kelly is the President of the Miami Valley Down Syndrome Association. She said they raised over \$80 thousand dollars last year for their Buddy Walk in Dayton. The money will go to help fund programs like summer camp, help parents pay for therapies, and this year they will be buying iPad's for some families. They also give 7% of the money they earned to the National Down Syndrome Society and this money is used for research. Nationally, the Buddy Walk raised over \$11 million dollars last year to help provide programs and services. Back when the Buddy Walk first started they only had 17 walks throughout the whole United States, but last year they had over 300, and even had their first walk in the country of Japan.

So, what has the Buddy Walk done to change America? Last year alone, there were almost 300 thousand people that participated in the Buddy Walk to raise money for Down syndrome. But more

importantly, these volunteers helped raise awareness and educate millions upon millions of others about Down syndrome.

So, why is this awareness about Down syndrome so important you ask? As my mom says, "my sister is part of the lucky 15% born with Down syndrome". Yes, I just said my sister is lucky to be born with Down syndrome... You see, nearly 85% of parents when told their baby will be born with Down syndrome, will choose to have an abortion. Which means that the parents will end their baby's life before it is even born. I can't imagine my sister not getting a chance to live. And I can't imagine my life without my sister. She is the best sister in the world and I love her so much.

One of my biggest fears for my sister is that someone will make fun of her as she gets bigger, and the Buddy Walk is doing a great job in promoting awareness so that one day my sister will be accepted by everyone, and no one will call her mean names and make fun of her. I also hope that one day, with the help of the Buddy Walk that those 85% of parents who are going to choose to end their baby's life will go down to zero. Those babies deserve to be lucky too, just like my sister.

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Our thanks go out to those who have fought to uphold our freedom

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