

MY MICHIGAN HERO

Kelle Smith

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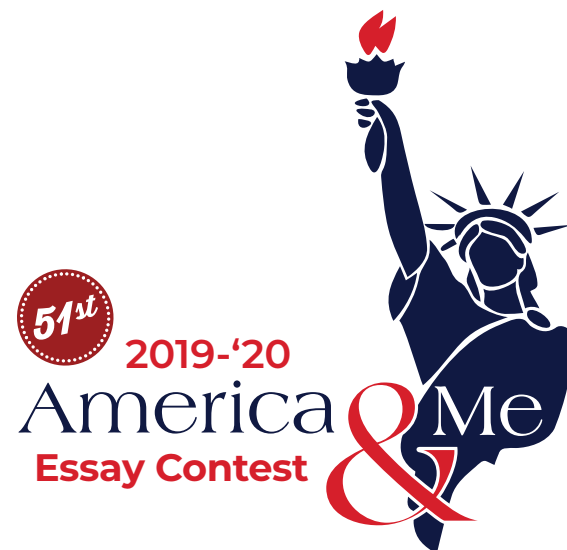
Walking through the doors of a new school is tough for any kid. For me, it was especially hard. When I was four years old, I was bitten in the face by a Greyhound mix. So, entering middle school looking different than all the other kids was difficult. Instantly, I became an outcast. I had one or two friends, but they weren't the greatest people to rely on. I was bullied *all year long!* Kids would call me a freak, worthless, and scarface. I have even been told directly to my face to take my life. The "popular kids" would push me against lockers and trip me in the hallways. Everyone would watch these unpleasant things happen, but nobody cared enough to help.

By the time seventh grade started, I was in a bad place mentally. The year went on. The days dragged. It was at the beginning of the second quarter. I and others were called down to the cafeteria by my assistant principle, Mr. Clements. This was unusual because normally I was called to the office. When I reached the cafeteria, I sat at the table farthest from the door, so I didn't draw attention to myself. Once Mr. Clements walked into the cafeteria, he instantly started to laugh. He looked at all of us and asked why we looked so terrified to see him. He sat down and started to explain why we were called down.

He announced to everyone that we were going to create a committee for kids that are being bullied and he needed students to help. He asked us if we wanted to be part of a team that works to get rid of bullying around our school environment. I already knew I was going to decline because I didn't want everyone to know that the quiet kid who gets pushed around is going to try to stand up against bullying. It made no sense to me. Plus, what would people think when they found out that I was helping the assistant principal? On the other hand, I was exhausted from sobbing every day because I had to get out of bed and go to school just to get the same hateful comments from students that I grew up with since kindergarten. I realized that this committee

could help me open up and tell people my story. I needed that committee more than it needed me.

After committing to be a part of the bullying committee, I realized that Mr. Clements wasn't like people described him at all. He wasn't mean, and he wasn't unfair. He motivated me to tell people my story and help kids in need, to make people smile and laugh when they need it most. I am currently still helping kids in need. I'm still fighting for bullying to stop. Mr. Clements is my hero because he gave me the confidence to stand up to bullying and use my voice against hate.



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