

A LETTER TO TOMMY

BY ANNIE AND DAVID BRAITHWAITE

Dear Tommy,

We are writing this letter to tell you how much we appreciated your kindness to Morgan at the Scouting court of honor last night. Although Morgan looks like you and the other boys, his autism creates road blocks that most people don't take the time to understand. Morgan can't screen out noise or light, the feel of his clothes on his body, or even the sound of his own breathing. I often try to imagine what it would be like to have such a heightened sense of awareness. Without medication, he would not be able to function at all.

As Morgan's mom and dad, we find it difficult to watch him struggle when he's with others his age. His deepest desire is to have friends and to be accepted, but making friends is also his deepest struggle. Last night he was nervous about getting his lines right, but you calmly led him through each part of the program. I will always have a picture in my mind of you, a small blond boy in glasses, looking up into Morgan's face, forcing him to make eye contact, telling him that he was going to be fine and that he was doing a good job. We watched as you smiled and clapped when he received his awards. You quietly put your hand on his arm to calm him when he became overzealous, and you prompted him when he stumbled over his lines.

Most important, you recognize Morgan's presence in your Scout troop, while others often ignore him and turn away their eyes, as if that will make him disappear. We've also been aware of you during Sunday School, helping Morgan read a scripture, encouraging him to sit quietly, smiling at him, and, in turn, giving him a reason to smile. One day when you're a father, you'll appreciate what it means to parents when they see a young man treat their disabled son with respect and love. We can see that you'll be a generous, kind adult. We know that the Lord has a special reward for you and others who love His "different" children, and Morgan will be there to cheer when you receive it.

Thank you for your goodness.

