

ADVOCATES

First, we listen ...

"Each of Us Is a Person First"

By Lori Newell, 2nd Prize Winner

There have been many times in my life where I have been labeled as someone or something that I'm not. I have been called many names besides my real one too. Sometimes, it hurts down deep inside. Sometimes, I want to just run away from it all. But, then I realize that I'm a person, I'm not an "it", or a "thing", or a "mental retard". I'm also not any of the other names or things I've been called. Yes, I have special needs, but this does not segregate me from being a person.

There are many different kinds of people in this world, but I don't feel that we should be labeled or categorized because every individual in this world is different. Many, many special needs people have proven that it doesn't matter what your special need is. What matters is that we are people "first" and foremost. You should never look at yourself as what people call you, but by what or who you think you are. You should also never judge yourself as something that you aren't. Because if you go by what other people say, how will you be able to believe in yourself?

Every single day of my life I have to look at myself in the mirror, as do you. If you look at the downside, you will never be able to see who you really are. It doesn't matter what others think, but what you believe. You should never look at yourself or others as being people that they aren't. Every individual in this world should not be labeled. They should be who they are, people. If you look at someone else as being something that they aren't, that's wrong.

I wrote a quote last year that I think follows through for every individual in this world. It goes as follows, "I am who I am, that's all I can be, I am who I am, I'm me."