

A Girl Who Will Fly

They fly; they fight; they save the world--such descriptions are often used to describe heroes. However, the everyday heroes, those admired day in and day out rarely have such inhuman abilities. Indeed, often, the heroes we idolize are humans just like us.

Many envision their hero as being a strong male, resembling Superman or Captain America. Such figures live "normal" lives by day and save the world by night. My *heroine* though, takes a much different form, one smaller and less imposing but every bit as inspirational.

Like a red crayon in a box full of blacks, she stands out, though not necessarily in a bad way. My heroine is simply unique, an eight year old girl no taller than a five year old. My heroine is Lydia Andrews.

Born a child plagued by Down's syndrome, Lydia has, her entire life, struggled even to revive. Nevertheless, despite enduring everything from feeding tubes to daily doses of medicine, Lydia has grown into one of the happiest, most exuberant children I know.

Some claim that heroes must do something great in order to earn this position of respect, arguing that to truly be heroic, one must save the world, in one way or another. However, I choose to think that heroes are like flowers blooming, perhaps their aid is most evident when their petals are fully spread, the extent of their beauty completely exuded but, at the same time, if one chooses to look closely enough at that emerging blossom, this same beauty can be detected.

Due to Down's syndrome, Lydia's appearance is far from analogous to that of other children her age. Despite this, I have found, in the years I spent coming to know this child, that her beauty is just as apparent, her heroism just as evident, I simply have to look a little deeper.

Lydia may not be your average child but her dreams are just as vivid, her hopes for the future as immense. Someday Lydia will do something great, and she knows it. She simply must enable others to see her potential in the same light.

So often is this young Hoosier looked down upon for her genetic disorder that, even as a child of mere eight, she has been forced to learn how to ignore the comments of others, how to focus instead of simply following her own dreams. It is Lydia's motivation, determination, and commitment to enduring this criticism that led me to describe her as my heroine. This girl is five years younger than me yet possesses courage and self-confidence I can only dream of. I find myself looking up to her, working to model my actions after her own kind, caring ones. If Lydia can be a compassionate individual despite the utter bluntness of human nature she has already faced, so can I.

She may only be eight but Lydia has already begun to make her mark on the sidewalk of humanity. Her small but steady hand has started to draw out the picture of her future. Now I must do the same. I must be empowered by the actions of this true heroine, encouraged to begin drawing a picture of my own.

Lydia Andrews is a Hoosier heroine in the best of forms. She may not have changed the world but she has changed me. This little girl has ignited a flame within me and within all others who know her, a flame that will, one day, turn into an inferno strong enough to change the nation.

Someday, Lydia *will* be more than merely *my* heroine. Someday Lydia will change the world. Someday Lydia will fly.