

The Caring Community at Cedar Springs: A Personal Story

Nolan is a Second Grader this year and had a harrowing dish-washing experience during class chore time a few weeks ago. Dish-washing, in general, is a harrowing experience for my son, but this time, a mug broke while he vigorously scrubbed it and cut his hand, requiring stitches to close the wound. His recent experience and my interaction with all of his caregivers here on campus reminds me to acknowledge the special people that walk the paths of Cedar Springs.

As a subject teacher and general lingerer here at CSWS, it's rare for me to leave campus before the end of the school day. I looked at my free Tuesday afternoon that day, however, and thought gleefully, "I'm going grocery shopping without my kids!" As I unloaded my groceries and was talking with my husband, Dudley, the phone rang. Caller ID announced that it was Annette MacBean, a fellow Second Grade parent. Thinking she was calling to talk playdates, we casually answered. Calmly, but firmly, Annette said, "It looks like Nolan's gotten hurt and you should come to school." Now Annette has two very active boys, so I know she knows "hurt".

Noticing the office's call and voicemail on my cell, I quickly hopped into the car and arrived at campus tout de suite. What awaited me were the stricken faces of students and adults, worried about my boy, Nolan. As I mounted the office stairs, the Eighth Graders, gardening across the drive, stopped what they were doing and shouted, "How's Nolan? Is he okay?" "I haven't even seen him myself, but I'll let you know!" was my response.

Entering the office, the people I trust most with my children, Scott, Lynn, Mrs. Deutsch, Monica and Lisa were all circled around my gray-faced, panicked boy. His hand was wrapped, though it was clear his cut needed attention. All eyes were assessing me for my level of calm as my little boy let down his semi-brave front and whined, "Mooooommmmyyyy!" As we prepped him to go, Monica, in her serene care and wisdom offered Nolan a clean t-shirt to wear.

Nolan and I carefully descended the stairs, and again the Eighth Graders stopped to express concern and wish speedy healing on Nolan. As we drove down Gold Meadows Road, I saw the group of parents (Annette included) who had witnessed Nolan's ascent to the office, and I waved thank you.

Nolan was very concerned about pain, probably more than actually experiencing it, he fearfully anticipated it, as we drove to the hospital. One funny moment in the car on the way to Marshall: "Mommy, am I going to have to have stitches?" Me: "I don't know, honey, could be." Nolan, in his most pitiful whine, "Aaaawwww..... I'd rather just have a hook!"

Coming home that night, there were multiple messages from Nolan's classmates' parents. Understandably, many of the children in his class were traumatized. By the accident that caused Nolan's cut, yes, but more so because their good friend Nolan was in pain. Many had cried too. Many told their parents how worried they were about Nolan. There was, in the class, a wellspring of concern that was genuine, raw, unfiltered emotion.

Returning to school the next day, Nolan was a bit of a celebrity. His tale of fourteen stitches in the ER and his mummy-wrapped paw were interesting, but more than anything, there seemed to be relief in many of his classmates that Nolan was still big, tall, sweet, goofy Nolan. His frightening display of the prior day had not altered him. My math students, too, all wanted assurances that Nolan was alright. I told the story (especially the part about the hook) many times that day, and invariably, the feeling I got from our kids here was relief. They could rest easier knowing everything was okay.

In telling Nolan's story and living through this little trauma with him, it is again clear to me that Cedar Springs is such a special place. There was so much outpouring of sympathy and well-wishing, so much competent care, that we were all touched. In reflection, though, my thankfulness is that we are part of a school where kids are not desensitized to the trials and travails of others. It is as if we are extended family. In movies, characters can engage in epic battles and sustain mortal wounds and we're only sorry that the movie is over. In our midst, however, a boy cut his hand on a broken mug and it was a BIG deal; a lot of people cared about both the accident and the outcome. Nolan and we thank you for your energies toward healing his hand, and I'm sure he'd be glad to show you his scar anytime. It's not quite as cool as a hook, but it's close.

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