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Letter to mom with autistic child demonstrates need for more education

A letter sent to an Ontario mother of an autistic child made news around the world. Its content is shocking in the extreme. The language used not only demonstrated this person's extreme hatred and total lack of empathy, but also their profound ignorance. Its substance was truly medieval. Worse, it harkened back to the days of Eugenics, a philosophy once advocated here in North America and put into practice by the Nazis. It is hard to believe that the attitudes demonstrated in this letter are still in existence in our society.

The viewpoints expressed in this abhorrent letter are extreme but serve to remind us not to allow such attitudes to flourish. They represent the dark side of humanity. Confronted by such vitriol, it is clear that we all have a shared responsibility to educate our citizens, at home, in schools and universities, in the workplace and in our communities, of our shared values of human dignity and the value we place on all persons.

From this soul shattering letter penned by a mother we witness a mother whose son Jacob Barnett was diagnosed with severe autism as a tod-

Andrew Tutty



ler. Now 15, Jacob is described as one of the brightest minds in Physics today and has moved to Waterloo to study at the famed Perimeter Institute, founded by Blackberry founder Mike Lazaridis. His mother, Kristine has chronicled the family's journey in the book "The Spark. A Mother's Story of Nurturing Genius."

Jacob has a deep passion for mathematics and physics but wears flip flops as he has trouble tying his shoes. But his mind is subtle in its grasp of questions that most of us can barely contemplate. Our societal values allow all to participate in life. We all benefit from the diversity and pure mystery of the human experience.

Andrew Tutty is a member of the Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee (HHAAC).

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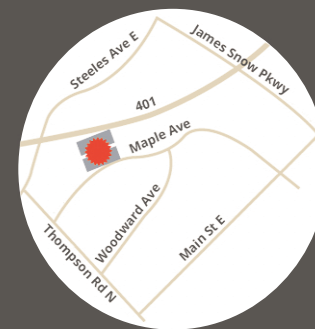
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