

Chad Francour

### Recalling My Experience

On January 28, 2004, the scene was a sunny, crisp, and cool day as all the snowmobiles fired up, slowly purring like cats. The crew was getting ready to go on our Wednesday night snowmobile trip to a restaurant in Wausaukee, Wisconsin. My brother and I came whipping around the corner at the crossing on Highway 41 right by Taco Bell and then it happened.

Have you ever had something happen to you, that was so detrimental that you would have to alter your whole outlook on life forever? I surely have had that happen to me when I got hit by that truck. I was put into a drug-induced coma for six weeks and spent 100 to 120 days in the hospital when I was 16 years old in Green Bay. I have done every type of therapy treatment you can imagine, but I had a chance at an excellent opportunity to enroll in the Mayo Clinic's Brain Injury Program over in Rochester, Minnesota.

Do you know the meaning of having extended family? A family that you would do anything for if she or he asked. I will not forget the first time I took a tour of the foster family's home. It was a normal looking home with two bathrooms, two living rooms, five bedrooms, a kitchen, and a cluttered garage. I proceeded to go upstairs, when I met the foster family that I would be living with for the next eight months. It consisted of a mother who was in her 30s and pregnant, a father who was also in his 30s, and who had a shaved head. There was, also, two boys. One was eight years old, with curly brown hair. He looked nerdy with his coke bottle glasses. Then there was Dakota, a two-year-old boy who had a mind of his crying to be molded. He had the physical build of an average two-year-old, with his black hair having been shaved, a dark complexion, and a mischievous grin on his face. Knowing that the family had a child who

loved Swedish Fish, I purchased some just before we got there in hopes of giving it to him, thus, creating a bond between us. You must have spotted them in my pocket. I decided that this was the family for me. A couple weeks passed, and then I went to Rochester.

Within the first week, Dakota was always coming in my room and would say some of the cutest things. For example, “Hey Shad, do you have any fishies?” He would also go on weird exploring quests through my room. “Hey Shad, what is this, what is this, what is this?” or “I get popcorn when I go fishing.” Probably the most stupendous saying from Dakota I remember is, “Things with you are so FERGOLICIOUS!”

My experience with extended family, I not only benefited from the Mayo Brain Injury Program, but also have gained a brother in Dakota. As a result of the program I am now more independent. It is given compensation techniques to which I can carry out daily living tasks that I would not have been able to learn if I would have stayed in Marinette. My incident in Rochester has given me a better outlook on life and how to appreciate the little things.