DISABILITY OR STRENGTH?

Does your difference hold you back from what you want to do or who you want to be? If your answer is simply yes, Savannah Duke, sophomore, has a story to be told, and it might change your mind.

Duke was named the most inspiring student at Dorman. She allows her unique aspect to be inspirational for others by proving her capabilities—even to the doctor who suggested her termination before birth.

Before she was born, doctors were aware of her disability; they didn’t know the exact reason for it. After her birth, a tumor was found on her left hipbone which stopped the growth of her left leg.

Duke’s parents knew she would be different; however, that didn’t stop them from wanting her. Abortion was not a desired option under any circumstances for her parents; they would do anything to help their daughter throughout life.

Though they had already come to a decision, fear still weighed on their thoughts. Would Duke be able to do everything they imagined?

At only ten days old, she started chemotherapy. Up to two or three years old, she used a walker. Then, she started using crutches. Walking may have taken her longer to learn than other kids, but the difference between her and others quickly disappeared as she got older.

“I’m just like other teenagers; there’s not really a difference between us. I am capable of doing mostly anything I would be able to do with the addition of a right leg,” Duke said.

For instance, as most other teenagers, she can drive. She even swims for Dorman’s Swim Team.

“When people notice my one leg, and do not see two, their assumption is I was in an accident, and they pity me. I’m not offended by the assumption or the pity because they do make sense, but it’s not necessary,” Duke said.

She’s constantly asked by little kids why she has one leg. At a baseball game, a little kid came up to her, and asked, “why you only have one leg?”

“I didn’t eat my vegetables when I was younger,” Duke jokingly responded. His jaw dropped.

Duke’s motivation originated from Psalm 139:13-16 which says, “for You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place— when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.”

Without Jesus, her positivity would not exist because it comes from Him alone. “I mean, I only have one leg. That’s seen as a big thing that would attract negativity, right? Not for me,” Duke said.

Duke was shocked that she inspired so many others and wanted to share her inspirations: her parents. She recognized the fact that it may sound cliche, but her reasoning cancels that out.

Since she was born with one leg, her parents went through the struggles for her. It was new to them, but it’s always been the same for Duke.

“Savannah does have quite a story. She is definitely positive and an inspiration for others; she doesn’t want exceptions made for her; she is as every other student. She has a heart with enough room for everyone, and she’s an intelligent girl,” said Mrs. Moore, English teacher.

This certainly isn’t the first time Duke’s story has been covered. Her mom, Wendy Duke, turned it into a full book: Grace in the Middle.

It also won’t be the last time it’s told. The Duke family receives invitations to speak in front of organizations every so often. Duke is continually allowing her difference to shine as everyone else should as well.