

I am truly honored to have the opportunity to be here tonight to share with you the impact the Morgan Center has had on my brothers, my family, and me.

My family, especially my brothers and I, are very close. Yes, Jack and Stephen both have autism. Stephen is non-verbal and Jack has few words, which makes communication very challenging. But they are great listeners - and even better secret keepers! Stephen also has cerebral palsy making it difficult for him to walk. But, if I'm being honest, I probably fall down a lot more than he does!

My brothers have challenges with breaking from their usual routine making learning new things very hard and unfamiliar places frightening. They are unable to make friends and their limited communication makes it hard to understand them leading to everyone's frustration.

My brothers require a lot of special attention.

**BUT THIS SPECIAL ATTENTION HAS MADE ME BETTER. I've LEARNED TO look past their challenges and see all the fun and unique qualities that make them who they are -- AND ITS MADE ME WHO I AM.**

But, our relationship is pretty much like any other sibling relationship. We love to listen to music together. It just so happens that Jack likes to listen to the same song for 3 months straight.

We watch all the Giants games together...though I may miss a play or two or all since they bounce right in front of the TV the entire time.

No matter what, though, we always have a great time and they've not only taught me but shown me the virtues of patience, understanding flexibility and trust.

These strengths are also the strengths of the Morgan Center.

Jack and Stephen started attending the Morgan Center just this past fall, transferring from a local Bay Area elementary school. The opportunity to attend The Morgan Center has been the best thing for, not only Jack and Stephen, but our entire family.

The Morgan Center is flexible and creates a welcoming environment for each student. For the first time, Jack and Stephen are in a place that was seemingly tailored just for them. They are part of a school that readily adapt to their needs rather than require Jack and Stephen to try to adapt themselves to a place and circumstances they really didn't understand.

The Morgan Center is full of amazing and knowledgeable staff who are not only

understanding but truly care about each child. They know each child's unique needs, their personality, their likes and dislikes. The staff continually offers encouragement, help, and lots of smiles. They share our joy in my brother's successes and are so patient when they face an obstacle.

Jack now does yoga and rides a bike. Stephen eats vegetables. I can't tell you how much patience this required! This is a kid who at one point wouldn't eat ANYTHING and only liked things that are crunchy. Anyone who can get him to eat a mung bean crepe deserves a medal! Jack and Stephen are able to do more and more because each opportunity to participate and learn is presented in ways that make sense to them. Jack and Stephen's willingness to try new things and participate in these activities shows me how much they trust the staff at the Morgan Center.

We just feel so fortunate to be a part of such an amazing school and community. On behalf of my entire family, we would like to thank all the staff, teachers, and aides who make The Morgan Autism Center such a special place, that truly care about the success of their students, as well as everyone in those students lives. Thank you to everyone here tonight for showing your love, support, and acceptance.