

Testimonial from Haverford Township Schools

The School District of Haverford Township
Chatham Park Elementary School
400 Alliston Road
Havertown, PA

May 29, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter on behalf of Shannon Garcia who is President of TransYouth Family Allies (TYFA). I have come to know Shannon as an Elementary School Principal recently informed that a transgender child would be making a social transition at our school. When I first learned that this was about to unfold in our school community, I had very little understanding of what a transgender child would require in the school environment. I needed to quickly get myself and my staff as informed and educated as possible.

The family of our transgender child has already sought the advice and support of TYFA and encouraged school personnel to do likewise. As a school we promptly set up a staff inservice with a TYFA consultant. After the inservice, events in the school and the community began to unfold at a rapid rate of speed. Much of what we were about to experience would be uncharted waters for me, my staff, the child, and her family.

As a school principal this experience has been similar to piloting a ship through stormy seas and not knowing which direction to set the compass. Maintaining frequent contact with Shannon Garcia was like having a lighthouse beacon shining brightly in the distance to guide the way. Shannon has a wealth of experience in supporting schools and she is very intuitive when it comes to practicing how people will react to the topic of a transgender child in a school setting. I quickly developed a trust and a confidence in her ability to keep me informed and to help keep things in perspective. To not lose sight of what's best for the child and her family in spite of intense prejudice and an unwillingness to embrace acceptance by a small but vocal segment of the adult population. She is also keenly aware of how the media and the internet can be a devastating force that through misinformation and intolerance can unleash the dark side of humanity. With Shannon's help we have been able to navigate through what I believe was the worst of the storm.

If you or someone that you know is in a similar circumstance, I would strongly encourage you to establish ongoing communication with Shannon Garcia. I am sure you will find her to be, as I did, a voice of reason on a very emotionally charged and much debated human condition.

Sincerely,
Daniel D. Marcella



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP

Chatham Park Elementary School

400 Allston Road
Havertown, PA 19083

May 29, 2008

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Daniel D. Marcella

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~ Our mission is to educate and to inspire a community of life-long learners ~