

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke and Members of the Committee. My name is Cory Michalec and I am a freshman at Tallmadge High School. I have played on the Tallmadge wheelchair basketball team for 2 years and have received my varsity letter for both years. Although I haven't scored in a game yet I have scored in pregame. I do lead the team in fouls with 3 and I'm kind of a crowd favorite. Everybody calls me Sparky.

Before this interscholastic basketball program, most people ignored me, were scared of me or said a quick hi in passing at school because they didn't know how to interact with me. I didn't have a lot in common with a lot of the other students. Basketball has helped me and other team members become part of the student body. We are invited and introduced at the sports banquet to a standing ovation. We are introduced at assemblies and even have a teacher vs team basketball game.

I now have many upper class friends both boys and girls and I think everybody at the high school knows me now.

I am just like every other student at Tallmadge.

I currently work hard at my academics and carry a 3.86 GPA and received a student scholar recognition award at the spring sports banquet. The reason I work so hard is because I want to remain eligible for basketball and understand that team basketball at this level is preparing me for future opportunities that will come in life.

A day doesn't go by that I am not asked my opinion about an upcoming school function on how the school can accommodate all students' not just able bodied students.

I am a member of a new committee at school called Student Council for Exceptional Students. This council is made up of students with disabilities and other students. This council was formed because of the awareness that the Wheelchair basketball team has brought to our high school Awareness that we are also students. The job of this council is to make sure all students with disabilities are offered the same opportunities in school at the rest of the student body.

Since Tallmadge has started this wheelchair program. I am also very proud of the community support we have received. We had 500 fans at our last home game. Our Sports Boosters passed out t-shirts with the logo, "this is how we roll". These shirts were donated by our local sporting goods store. Our bus received a police and fire escort back into the city after losing to the Wooster generals in the state finals.

This is something the city does for all teams that make it to the state championship games. We are state runner ups the last 2 years. It was really cool and made us all very proud of our accomplishment.

I would say that this program has been very healthy for the entire City of Tallmadge also.

I haven't decided what my career path is going to be after high school. We have had meetings with the school administration about starting a school radio program and announcing the varsity games. This is something that I am thinking about doing after college. I also have

worked on some design of uniforms for the Tallmadge teams at the local sporting goods store. I have even talked to Mayor Kline about possibly running for Mayor when he steps down.

What I do know is being part of the Tallmadge Wheelchair Basketball program has given me confidence that I can do whatever I set my mind to and although I may not be able to walk, I have the same opportunities as every other student at Tallmadge High School thanks to ASPO. Please support this program so that other kids like me can have a chance to play basketball too.