



## Palm Beach Fellowship of Christians & Jews 2019 Essay and Creative Arts Competition

### Essay Award - Grade 7

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#### A Field of Hope

Not everyone born into this world is equal. Some people are born with high intelligence, and some people are born with tremendous athletic or artistic abilities. Some are faced with greater challenges and feel a lack of hope. Special needs children and those born with medical conditions may live every day of their lives filled with a hope for a better tomorrow. Children born with challenges are special. Each child is truly exceptional because of his or her unique situation. Some special needs children are born with mental disabilities while others have physical disabilities. This year I was faced with the difficult challenge of working with special needs children on a soccer field.

Nolan, the child I worked with, had physical growth delays as well as moderate intellectual disability associated with Down Syndrome. After my experience with Nolan, I realized that special needs children have a love for playing. Working with Nolan tapped into my sense of hope that one day all children with disabilities will be able to participate to their fullest potential. Meeting and dealing with special needs children like Nolan forced me to search deep inside myself to determine why I was scared of the differences between Nolan and me. Prior to working with Nolan, I avoided making eye contact with special needs children. My whole world opened up when I opened my mind and heart to Nolan. I thought that it was going to be difficult to work with Nolan because of his disabilities. At first, he was having a hard time listening to directions of what to do and when to do it, but after a while, he was rushing through the drills as if he was a pro at soccer. Special needs children who play sports have the same goals as normal children do. They want to be great at a sport not only because it is fun, but because they love it.

Nolan represents all children that are born with a disability. There is always hope that one day there will be a cure for Down Syndrome and other forms of mental disabilities. My hope is that society will not abandon, exclude, or isolate individuals with special needs. We are all God's children, and my faith in people gives me hope that all special needs children will feel included in our society. The Dalai Lama once said, "When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways – either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits, or by using the challenge to find our inner strength." There is always hope in my heart that one day there will be a cure for all who are afflicted with special challenges. Most of all, I hope for a society that includes and embraces those with special differences. After all, we are each other's hope for a brighter tomorrow.