

Here at Lawton Chiles Middle School, we believe that it is our differences that make us special. We also realize that sometimes our differences can be confusing or even hard to understand. That's why the LCMS newspaper staff believes it is our responsibility to not only entertain our audience of readers but to educate you as well. We want to thank Linsey Shelton for sharing her personal story.

I'M JUST SITTING INSTEAD OF STANDING!

Reporter: Linsey Shelton

You may have seen me around school. I am the girl with the shiny wheels. Do you wonder why I am in a wheelchair? When I was born, I weighed in at 2 pounds 13 ounces. The doctors rushed me out to the neonatal unit, and I had to stay in there for five weeks. When I could breathe on my own and drink out of a bottle, the hospital sent me home.



When I was seventeen days old, the doctors called my mom and told her some frightening news. The doctors had just realized that while I was being born, the lack of oxygen caused PVL resulting in cerebral palsy. I am actually very lucky because some of my friends with cerebral palsy can not even talk.

I went into therapy right away. The therapist taught me how to hold my back up so I could sit up, and they taught my mom exercises to give me so my arms and legs would not get stiff. The speech therapist exercised my mouth so I could talk better!

I received my first manual wheel chair when I was about three years old. I still have happy memories about my purple cruiser. In it I could move faster, even though my parents still had to push me. I rode it to half-day preschool.

The next year, when I was four, I went to Pre-K at Lawton Elementary School. That was the first time I realized that I would be away from my parents all day long. I was scared because I did not know any of the other kids in the class. It went fine. Our whole class had an assistant, but mostly she was there for me. Her name was Mrs. Jones.

I don't remember asking my parents why I couldn't walk. I recognized that I was different when I went places with my mom, but it didn't sink in until I was older. Then when I saw other kids jumping and running, it sank in that I couldn't do those things. I wished I could. I hope to work on that, but it hasn't happened yet.

My first power wheelchair sped into my life when I was six years old. It was a tiny, reddish-colored chariot!

In elementary school, people knew me and knew why I was in a wheelchair. People were very friendly to me. After elementary school, I went to Jackson Heights Middle School. Last year was my first year at Lawton Chiles Middle School. The students at this school are very friendly, but they don't know my history, so they don't know how to approach me. I think that if I were in their place, I would do the same thing!

There are some things I would like to share with the students who are uncomfortable. First, please do not be afraid to come and talk to me. I am just

like you, except I roll instead of walk! Second, I have many of the same hobbies as you! I like to read a plethora of books (that's for you, Mrs. Darling!). I am a bookworm. I am a cheerleader for Pop Warner. I love to shop, especially at Macy's! I love to draw, although I'm not very good at it. I like to watch television, especially dancing with the Stars that just premiered. I like to swim and go out on my grandfather's pontoon boat and relax in the sunshine. I fight with my older brother (Usually he wins—I argue with him and sometimes I win). But I am really close to my brother. You can talk to me about any of the same things you talk to your other friends about!

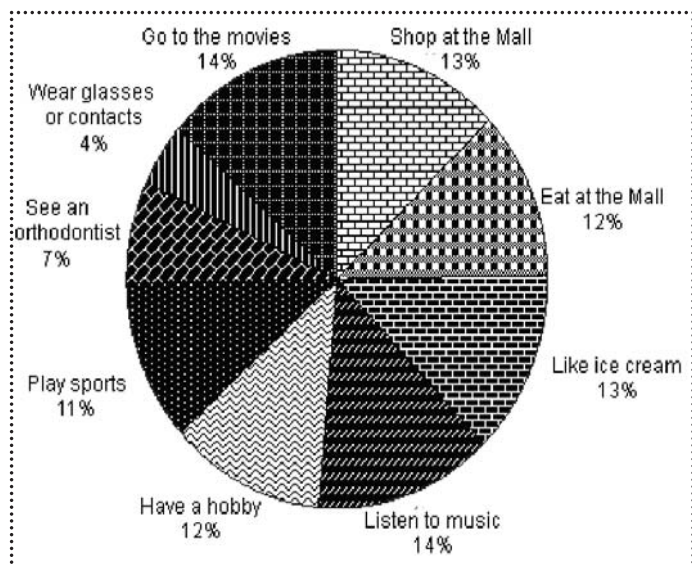
Sometimes people offer their help, which is greatly appreciated! They open doors for me. Sometimes friends walk me to my first class and strap me down in the bus so I don't roll around in the wheel chair. A friend sits with me at lunch. Sometimes people offer to throw away my trash. But what I appreciate the most is conversation! Just come up and talk to me!

Chillin' with the Panthers

Reporter: Thomas Dumas

Have you ever wondered what makes a LCMS Panther? Who are you? What do you like to do? Where do you like to go? We decided to find out.

Our roving reporters interviewed over 160 Panthers (that's over 10%) to find out how Panthers chill. See if you share the same interests as your peers. Look for our reporters in at a lunch break near you.



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