



Hannah Pipher

Mt. Vernon High School, Mt. Vernon, IL

Let the Games begin!

I knew very little about soccer going into this, along with most of us. We were pretty much all thrown into it blindly with only our faith to guide us. No one knew how it was going to work, no one knew how it was going to happen, but we tried anyway. And before we all saw it happening, a team was created of eight young, very talented youth.

As far as I'm concerned Unified Soccer is just like any other sport. Athletes are athletes. Coaches are coaches. Practice is practice. A team is, well, a team.

My name is Hannah Pipher, i am a peer partner for Unified Soccer, and this is my story.

When first hearing about Unified Soccer I wasn't sure if it was something I'd be interested in, or even good at. After all, knowing hardly anything about the sport itself scared me. I just remember hearing Coach Clodi telling me that it didn't matter, it was meant to help unify the athletes and peers.

We attended our first practice, all a little nervous about how it would go. Really though, we had nothing to be worried about. Passing, striking, dribbling, and little bit of blocking took place in that first practice. Worries vanished, and the fun began. With all of us running up and down the field we played a fun, but very productive game of red light-green light.

Though no specific words can really explain what being a peer partner feels like, as it's different for everyone, I'll try to break it down.

Whether it's a brother or sister, cousin, or friend's sibling, think of a younger child you know for a second, does the child you're thinking of have someone special that they look up to? A sister, brother, aunt, uncle, mom, dad? If so, than you know the look in their eyes when they do something special for them. Help on homework, fixing a broken toy, advice on a certain sport. Anything really. Well, that's what being a peer partner is like. Having someone look up to you as a role model. The praises you give them, the pats on the back. It's the little things that matter.

The smiles and laughs of those four very special faces as we roll around, get tripped up, help each other out or even getting caught sneaking a drink in between plays is something some can never get used too. At least it's something that I can never get used too.

Sometimes it's hard, knowing that someone looks up to you, because know that you need to be the best version of yourself can scare a lot of people. But they don't care. They just want someone who will be there and not leave them. I may be wrong, but that's what I've figured out so far in the time we have worked with those four beautiful, happy, precious faces.

I'm Hannah Pipher, a peer partner for Unified Soccer, and that is my story of how four people can change your life forever.