

Never Pass Up a Chance ...

In a small community such as the Hemophilia community we all have to remember to never pass up the chance to share our story. Most people do not know much, if anything, about bleeding disorders so it is important for us to share our stories when we get the opportunity. My example of never missing a chance to share our story is a pretty unique one.

As the City Administrator in Cannon Falls I was given a very special chance that I did not pass up. On a recent Wednesday morning I received a phone call from my Public Works Director telling me that someone called him saying they were with the White House and wanted to meet in twenty minutes. We knew from newspaper stories that the President was coming to Minnesota as part of a three state bus tour, but we both assumed it was someone playing a joke on us. To be safe, we showed up and within a few minutes about ten White House advance team members arrived and introduced themselves. Cannon Falls had been chosen to host the President's Minnesota speech and Town Hall discussion.

A few weeks earlier, another advance team had been scouting locations in southern Minnesota and had stopped in Cannon Falls on their way back to the airport to have lunch. They loved our historic and vibrant downtown, the rivers that run through the community, and our beautiful parks.

Five days before the President's speech, the final advance team was in town to pick the actual site and get things ready. We drove White House staff members to our various

parks and waited while they discussed camera views, lighting, backdrops, etc. While we were at the final location, a group of five very large black SUV's pulled up. About twenty Secret Service agents introduced themselves and started doing their evaluations of the sites. Most of my day was spent sitting and watching as all this happened and answering the occasional question.



Isaiah Reeves and President Barack Obama

While the Secret Service was reviewing one of the parks, I had a chance to talk with one of the White House staff members. I took the opportunity to mention that my son Isaiah had Severe Hemophilia and that I served on our regional Hemophilia Foundation Board.

I told him how much we appreciated the new Health Care legislation that provided so many benefits to our community such as the elimination of lifetime caps, the ability to continue on the parents plan until the age of 26, and the elimination of the pre-existing conditions clause when switching plans. I explained how this was not only good for my family but for our Community as a whole. I finally asked if he could thank the President on behalf of my family and our Community the next time he saw him. The White House staffer then said, "Well maybe your son can thank him in person. I'll see what I can do." I had been listening to how tight the schedule was going to be and how things had to be timed out to the minute so I really didn't think it would happen but I thanked him for the opportunity if possible.

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On Saturday afternoon I received an email from the White House asking for a long list of information on my son and I for background checks. We were going to meet President Obama! Monday couldn't come soon enough.

On a beautiful summer day with the Cannon River as a back drop, my family and I went through tight security to be seated in the front row to watch President Obama give his speech. As we sat next to many State and Federal Legislators waiting for the President to arrive, I received a text from the White House asking us to come to the back of the seating area. From there, we were taken to a tent along with a number of our area elected officials to wait for the President to arrive. The White House staffer who I had talked to originally about the new Health Care legislation came in and made sure we were last in line to meet the President so we would have more time with him. As we sat and waited my son and I chatted with Senator's Franken and Klobuchar about why we were there and Health Care legislation. Again, never pass up the chance to spread our story.

Soon the ground began to literally vibrate under our feet and an all black bus pulled up. This was the brand new bus purchased by the Secret Service for transporting the President. They say it can withstand a direct rocket attack and I believe it. It was a very impressive thing to see. The President came bounding into the tent just giving off energy and excitement. We waited in line for about five minutes as the twenty or so people ahead of us moved through and got their picture taken with the President. As we came up at the end, my son Isaiah confidently stuck out his hand and shook President Obama's hand. I stepped up to do the same and said that we were there to personally thank him for all of his work in getting the new Health Care legislation passed. I explained that Isaiah had Severe Hemophilia and how much it meant to my family and our Community as a whole. Isaiah then personally thanked him for the elimination of lifetime caps and the other positive things the bill would provide for him. President

Obama then told Isaiah that young men like him are our future and to keep fighting for his Community, to stay involved, and to keep sharing his story. We then took a few quick pictures and we were ushered back to

our seats. The speech started and towards the end someone asked about the "Obamacare" Health Care legislation. As part of his response President Obama said this pointing right at Isaiah:

So part of the Affordable Care Act health care reform, also known as "Obamacare" -- by the way, you know what? Let me tell you, I have no problem with folks saying "Obama cares." I do care. (Applause.) If the other side wants to be the folks who don't care, that's fine with me.

But, yes, I do care about families who have been struggling because of crushing health care costs. I met a young man here who -- right here -- who, as a consequence of health care reform -- he's got a blood disorder that, if it weren't for the health care reform act, his family would have been capped out and he wouldn't have the help that he needs. (Applause.) So -- and you can tell he's an outstanding young man and he's going to do great things, and his family is not going bankrupt as a consequence of it.



It was an amazing end to a very amazing experience for my family that really would not have happened if I would not have taken the opportunity to spread the word about the bleeding disorders community when the chance presented itself. Not everyone will have a chance like this to share our story with the President but you will have chances with your elected officials, potential donors to our Foundation, and others. When that chance presents itself don't miss your opportunity. Share your

story, spread the word about our cause, and advocate for our Community.

By Aaron Reeves

