

June 22, 2004

Dear Dr. Donow and the Staff at Karafin,

As I sat watching the graduates at the Monteverde Restaurant on June 22, many things passed through my mind. These things have always been in my mind since Brendan began Karafin in the ninth grade, but they became very dramatic and very vivid on that evening.

The staff at Karafin should be truly commended for their staunch and unending support of those who are disabled. Watching the faculty interact with the kids in a social, yet somewhat formal setting reminded me of what I always knew, the true definition of success really isn't a 4.0 GPA, acceptance into an Ivy League College, or a big-time career that brings in six figures. Success is making a change in your life for the better, even if it is a small one. It's picking yourself up after you've fallen by the wayside and trying to follow the right path, even if you only take half a step forward for every ten steps backward.

The staff at Karafin have supported Brendan through four tumultuous years of high school. There were times when I felt his behavior would preclude his continuation at Karafin, but we worked together to stand firm in our disciplinary measures until Brendan came around. No one ever gave up on him. He always had the kind of support that usually comes only from family.

The word family brings me to my conclusion. All of you at Karafin have been Brendan's family for four years, showing the kindness and guidance that only a family can do. Any half steps forward that Brendan takes can only be attributed to your unending support. I can only pray that all those half steps forward lead him to a very productive life.

Sincerely,

Stacey Stote