

2020 SCWA Lifetime Achievement | Brian Campbell



Brian Campbell was diagnosed with Williams syndrome when he was 6 months old. The genetic condition is characterized by medical problems, including cardiovascular disease (Brian underwent open-heart surgery when he was 5), developmental delays and related learning disabilities.

But by the time Brian was 11 years old, he had discovered the car wash industry and was being called a genius in his field of expertise because he displayed encyclopedic knowledge of car washes and car wash equipment.

Brian struggled with simple math when he was young and never expressed a desire to learn to read until his car wash obsession was added to the mix. He wanted no part of conventional children's books. But a stack of car wash magazines and brochures were like Candyland. "Read them to me! Read them to me!" he urged his mother Valerie.

"At that point the car wash fascination caused his life to light up," she said.

Valerie cut pictures out of car wash magazines. She placed the pictures in photo albums, creating "books" to share with Brian. "What do you think this picture should say?" she would ask.

"And he would tell me what it should say, so I would write down his words. Pretty soon he was able to read it because I would point to the words as he would say them and that's how he learned to read."

Those afflicted with Williams syndrome (an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 in the United States) tend to be social, friendly and endearing, according to the Williams Syndrome Association, which said parents often say the joy and perspective a child with WS brings into their lives is unimaginable.

The WS diagnosis came later. Valerie said she and her husband, Dale, were told that Brian, due to his heart condition, would not live past the age of 10.

Bad news came when the Campbells were told Brian would be severely mentally challenged. Valerie said they got this

advice: You're young. Institutionalize your child. Start over.

Institutionalizing Brian was not an option they were willing to consider. Complications or not, let's do this.

"They weren't about to forget about him," Brian's grandmother Marilyn Paxson said. "They knew God had a purpose for his life."

Enter the Car Wash Industry.

Valerie said people with WS have hypersensitive hearing and, initially, automated car washes terrified Brian. He would hold his ears and cry during trips through a car wash.

But as soon as car wash rides were over, he would stop crying and say, "Go again, go again!" From that sprang a love of car washes.

"Disabled people, a lot of them like spinning things, like pinwheels or fans or things that just go round and round," Valerie said, adding that spinning car wash brushes grabbed Brian's attention.

Brian is a Celebrity in the Car Wash World.

People in the car wash industry were touched and inspired after learning Brian's story. In 1993, he attended the ICA Convention in Las Vegas and received a standing ovation when he stepped up to a microphone and sang a song about his love of car washes. (*see box below*)

Brian attended his first SCWA Convention in 1993 and the rest is history - his heartwarming story has had an impact on all our SCWA members. His story is a true motivation to everyone.

Car wash owners like Jimmy Short of Mr. Klean treat Brian to perks worthy of someone who knows virtually everything there is to know about car washes. Brian can glance at any car wash and tell you what kind of equipment is used, what's good or bad about the equipment and probably where the equipment manufacturer is located. He stays up to date because he subscribes to three car wash publications.

The official presentation to Brian will be on Thursday morning, January 30, 2020 during the SCWA Convention in Fort Worth.

Brian's song (Lyrics):

*You are marvelous, yes indeed.
You have car washes, one, two, three.
Sprayers and brushes of all kinds.
Some are even touch-free.
I love all of you just the same.
You are so special to me.
Being here with you is my dream.
Thank you for spoiling me.
You are wonderful.
You are grand.
This is better than Disneyland.
Car wash heaven, here we are.
Let's all have a great time.*

Congratulations to Brian Campbell and his family from SCWA.