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GA Allows Transgender Girl To Use - Oh My! -The Girls' Room

By Guest

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Abstract

By Lianne Simon Atlanta Gender Variations is a support group for the families of gender variant children. A few months ago they invited me to speak about intersex and share some of my history. One of the issues they shared with me was that of Skylar, a twelve-year-old transgender girl, who had been denied use of [...]

Article

By Lianne Simon

Atlanta Gender Variations is a support group for the families of gender variant children. A few months ago they invited me to speak about intersex and share some of my history.

One of the issues they shared with me was that of Skylar, a twelve-year-old transgender girl, who had been denied use of the girls' restroom at her school. Although they had instructed her to use the faculty restroom, she had, on at least one occasion, been denied its use as well.

Sometime later, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that the administration had listened to reason and reversed the school's decision. A few days ago, Skylar returned to school and is being treated the same as the other girls in her classes.

Skylar's mother, Kristine, agreed to talk a bit about Skylar's history.

Lianne: Hi, Kristine. Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. You had mentioned, I think, that you have three children?

Kristine: Yes. Spencer was our first born son (1998). All boy from the moment he could walk...tough, all about playing with balls and baseball etc. Cole was our second-born son (2000). And was the happiest baby I've ever seen--smiling from what seemed like the second week of life! Then our daughter Sylvie was born 18 months later (2002). Cole and Sylvie looked so much alike we called them "the twins". They were inseparable--and still are.

Lianne: When did you first notice that Cole wasn't your typical boy?

Kristine: Since the day Cole could walk, he would put on whatever women's shoes were lying around. From there, the obsession with anything pretty, sparkly, or Barbie began. Both Cole's dad and I were on board with whatever made our children happy. At no point did we say "no" to anything that was considered "girly". We just wanted him to be happy. Over time--I'd say at about three or four years

old, he knew already that other people outside of our home didn't "get it" and started referring to how he behaved in our home as "the secret". It breaks my heart now to even think about, but there you have it. At no point did Cole express a desire to live as a girl. Never said anything that would lead us to believe there was more at play here than just dress up.

Lianne: When did that change?

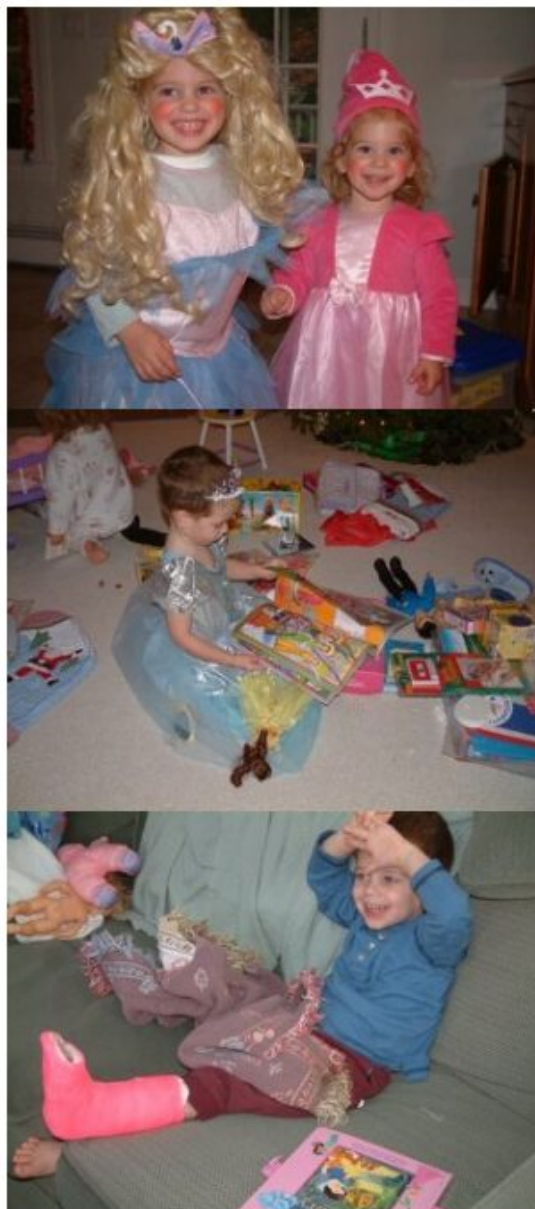


Figure 1. 1

Kristine: When Cole was ten, his father and I divorced. One day, I asked Cole, "Do you want to be a girl or just like dressing up like one?" He replied "No...just like dressing up". All along, Spencer had put up with Cole dressing up, playing with Barbies etc, because it didn't affect him. Cole and Sylvie were always off doing their thing, and Spencer was out playing and, for the most part, kept Cole's secret. He would sometimes taunt Cole, and in general they didn't like each other. Spencer had little patience for Cole's

intense nature and high energy.

In November 2011, I saw a segment on Anderson Cooper about transgender teenagers. A friend had once pointed out that she felt Cole might be dealing with that issue. I didn't buy it, because I had asked Cole and he said no. But I recorded the show anyway to show him. I didn't single him out when one day I told him and Sylvie about the show and suggested they watch it. Because it was interesting, and I have always been open with them about gay rights and activism etc. Off to basketball practice I went one night with Sylvie, and I received a text from Cole saying he had watched the show and felt that he might be transgender. I burst into tears....mostly for relief finally "knowing" what was going on with him. But also because I instantly knew that this was going to be a lot harder than him coming out as gay, which was what I truly believed about him.

Lianne: So you took him to a specialist?

Kristine: Yes. I went head on to get Cole to where he needed to be. I lined up a counselor (who as it turns out knew very little about transgender issues, but had good intentions) and within a month, Cole put the brakes on and said I was pushing him too fast! He wasn't quite ready. His dad was also very supportive during this time, but I believe had a slightly more difficult time processing the idea. Like maybe he'd change his mind etc. But he listened to Cole, as I did, and did the research and was quickly on board with moving forward to help Cole.

During this time, Cole watched all of Jazz's videos on YouTube, and we did as well. It all started making sense. And by February, he was eager to begin transitioning. However, he was struggling with confidence issues at that time and would dress out some days at home, but still present as Cole to friends, school etc. It was a tough time for us because I wanted him to go all in, and he just wasn't "there" yet. It also made Spencer nuts--he could not wrap his head around it.

Lianne: When did Cole make the transition?

Kristine: In June, my friend who was the one whom I mentioned above and is also a hair stylist, put real hair extensions in Cole's hair, and he officially became "Skylar". School was out and we were going away for a month back home to New England. So off we went with Skylar, and the summer was great for her.

Lianne: Did Skylar go right back to school then?

Kristine: No. When we returned, I home schooled her to give her more time to adjust and settle in to being "Skylar". Spencer was not happy at all during this time. How would this affect him? That's all he cared about. And I made it clear that anyone who came into our home would be told about Skylar and would have to be okay with it. Surprisingly for Spencer, his friends not only didn't care much, but one of his closest girlfriends has a good friend who is transgender. All was well in Spencer's world once again!

Lianne: At what point did you find a support group?

Kristine: We joined Atlanta Gender Variations immediately on the recommendation from a few trans friends I had made through a friend of mine back in Boston.

They also recommended Dr Spack who as it turns out one of our good friends had worked with "Norm" and got us an appointment in June of 2012. AGV was a great group, and Skylar developed an immediate bond

and friendship that still thrives with Britt who is also a MTF twelve-year-old. Britt's family, myself, Skylar, and Sylvie spend quite a bit of time together, and in the winter, we met up with Jazz and her mom Jeanette at the Coke museum for a day of fun and girls being girls. It was awesome for all of them. And they all still text, Instagram, etc.

In December, I brought Skylar back to Boston, and she had her Vantis implant put in. She was thrilled.

Lianne: The implant was to delay Skylar's puberty?

Kristine: Yes. Her blood levels were monitored (along with her physical development) and when the time was right, the implant was put in. This suppresses testosterone so that she won't develop typically masculine features, such as facial and body hair and an adam's apple, etc. She could finally breathe a sigh of relief!

Lianne: When did she return to public school?

Kristine: In January, Skylar returned to the middle school where she had attended as Cole. People came out of the woodwork in support of her. She has more friends now than ever before. There have been some mean-spirited people, mostly boys, but for the most part she ignores them. The school has been very supportive and adaptable.

Lianne: But they forbid Skylar to use the girls' restroom?

Kristine: Yes. The principal said it wasn't up to the school, but they would go along with whatever the administration decided.

I went to the area superintendent this summer and met with her and the policy administrator and pleaded our case to have her be able to use the girls' restroom. After a few weeks of reading through the materials and doing research, they decided in our favor and now Skylar is just like any other girl at her school! There is no written policy so that is my next goal--to have them put a written policy in place.

Lianne: That went much easier than I thought it would. What's next?

Kristine: Skylar is badgering me to find a doctor who will begin hormone treatments, but to date, none of them will. It's frustrating for her. Dr. Spack is retiring, and it is difficult to reach him and his office lately. He used to answer my emails directly, but not so much anymore. He said he would probably start her next year but I don't know where that stands now.

Lianne: Thanks so much for sharing. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Kristine: In June Skylar, Sylvie and myself flew up to Philadelphia to attend the Trans-Health Conference. There we stayed in a hotel with all the other families who were attending with their children. It was an amazing experience...aside from the educational part of the conference. The kids came together in a large group of about 20ish kids and spent four days inseparable... going out to eat or just running around the hotel playing and hanging out as teens do. The bonding that happened over those few days was intense and the best experience for us all.

Skylar's 13th birthday was August 16th. Her friends contacted me to let me know they were throwing her a surprise party. I just had to order the pizzas and drop her off. She knew they were going to have

a party for her, but didn't know when. She was so incredibly happy when we showed up at the party. About fifteen kids, mostly girls, but a few boys as well, jumped out and whisked her away to a night of celebration just for her.

Nothing like this had ever happened to Cole. His friendships were never that close or deep because Cole could never truly be himself. Now that Skylar is thriving, her friendships are what they should be for a 13-year-old. I stood there, choking back tears of joy, seeing my daughter truly happy and being celebrated in a way that Cole never had been. I still well up thinking about her face and the high she was on for days after. We are so lucky, and I'm forever grateful to these amazing kids and their families.

Lianne: Thanks for sharing so much, Kristine. All the best on your photography business.

Cross-posted from Lianne Simon

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