



# AMALIA STARR

VICTORIOUS WOMAN ESSAY CONTEST 2009

SECOND PRIZE WINNER

***It is one of the most beautiful compensations in life...that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. —Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Who would have ever thought that I would get a second chance in life by helping my son with disabilities achieve his dream to live independently?

In 1973 when my second son, Brandon, was born I could tell just by looking at him he was different, but back then most parents didn't speak openly about their child's differences. For comfort I searched at bookstores and libraries for a sensitive book written by a mother who was candid about her feelings and experiences while raising a child who was "different". I never found that book, and vowed if I couldn't find it that someday I would write one.

Over the past 12 years I have spend almost every minute and every penny on writing my story. I had never written anything before so I had to educate myself from scratch. I was inspired and guided by Eckhart Tolle's book "The Power of Now." I learned how to stay in the present moment and how to lean into my fear when I doubted myself, which seemed to be most of the time. But I couldn't allow anything to stop me. I kept my calendar empty except for my immediate family, and worked only when I had to in order to pay my bills. I created a part-time job selling women's accessories that my friends made for me. I was so passionate about writing that it consumed almost every waking moment. I felt it was my calling to share my truth and be a vessel of *hope* to other parents who have a child/adult with a disability. Although I wasn't a trained writer the burning subject matter and my deep passion drove me to completion.

I kept my promise and vow, which I made over thirty-five years ago. In June, my book, *Raising Brandon*, will be released. It will be available for other parents in bookstores, libraries, and on my website. I have accomplished my dream, and now I am embarking on a whole new speaking career at age sixty-two.

My youngest son, Brandon, has a form of autism called Asperger Syndrome, untreatable epilepsy, plus severe learning disabilities. The professionals that worked with Brandon said that he would never be able to live on his own. They were wrong. Today, Brandon is thirty-six years old, and he has lived in his own apartment for the past twelve years, enjoying his independence.

We live in the same city, but independent of one another. That is what every parent dreams of; helping their child to live the best life possible, and today Brandon does.

With love, hope, hard work, and determination miracles do happen and dreams do come true.

## *Congratulations, Amalia!*

**Your passion shows through with every sentence,  
And while your journey inspires each of us who has a dream,  
You are reminding us that persistence is rewarded.**

Read more about Amalia's journey on her blog at:  
<http://raisingbrandon.blogspot.com>  
Learn more about Amalia's book: <http://www.mountainstarpublishing.com>