

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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A Special Bond between Two Special People

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Most people can look back over their lives and point to special relationships they had that shaped them into the individuals they are. This is true for Reserve junior Ben Fletcher, as a special bond he has formed with a special needs student at school given him direction for his future.

It was two years ago when Aaron arrived at Reserve High School. Fletcher noticed him sitting alone at lunch and decided to join him in the cafeteria. Ever since then, their relationship has grown into a strong friendship.

"Aaron is a great kid. He came to Reserve about two years ago and was a very shy kid, who didn't say much. I started sitting with him at lunch and over the last two years, he has become my best friend. I'm an aide in the Special Ed class here at school so we interact with each other all the time. Aaron is just an amazing kid. It has been great to watch him grow."

Fletcher is a star football and basketball player at Reserve, and is also on Reserve's track and field team. He is the president of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter and is the Vice President of the student council. He hopes his relationship with Aaron has made more of an impact on others than any of his other endeavors.

"I hope others see my relationship with Aaron and see it as an example of how we need to treat others regardless of their situations. Never for a second was I worried what others may think of me. Our friendship has made me grow into a better person. Honestly, Aaron has done more for me than anyone could ever know."

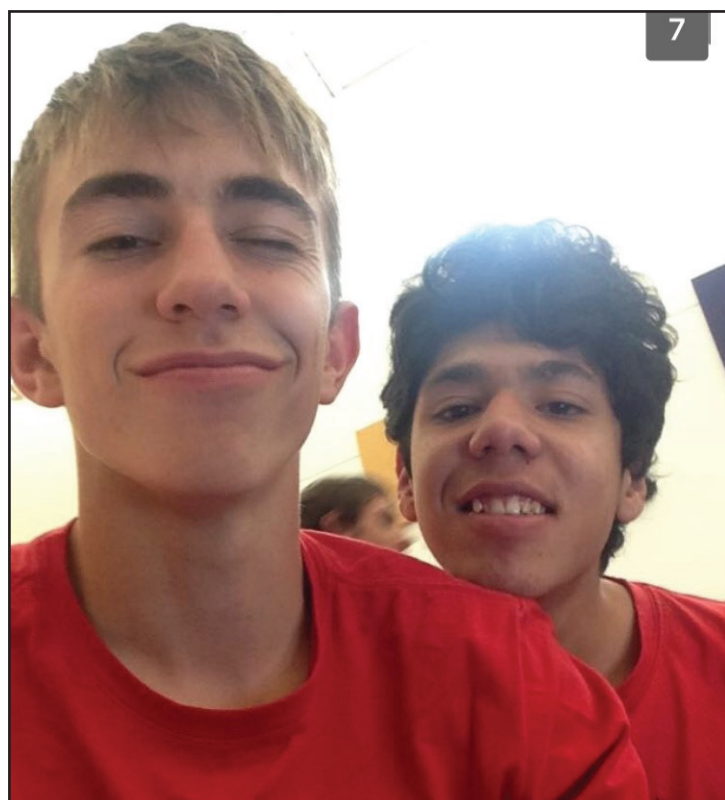
He continued by saying, "My parents have always taught me that I'm not only representing myself but I'm representing my family, my friends, my school and the community. I always try and do the right thing and lead by example so that, especially the younger kids here at Reserve see me as a good example."

Fletcher also credits Aaron with guiding him into his future endeavors as a Special Ed teacher.

"Aaron has made me a better person and because of him I want to go to college and become a Special Ed teacher and I owe that to him. If I would never have met Aaron, I guarantee becoming a Special Ed teacher would never have crossed my mind."

Growing up in Reserve, Fletcher has always participated in sports and says that being part of a team is like having an extended family.

"My older brother and I were always competing against each other in some type of sports growing up. To me, sports are like having a second family and here in Reserve everyone is involved for the most part. You get really close with your teammates and it helps you kind of break away from all of the life's



other worries and just have fun.”

He continued by saying, “I love basketball more than any sport I play. Track and field is fun too but basketball has been one sport that has really given me more than any other sport I have played. From my coach to my teammates, I enjoy every single aspect of the game.”

His peers and even the teachers at Reserve think highly of Fletcher, voting him in at chapter president of the FFA and vice president of the student body. He understands the responsibility on his shoulders to lead his classmates and is honored to accept the challenge.

“When you are in a small town, you have to find other things to do besides just sports and FFA has been another avenue for me to be involved. I like the competitions, seeing other people from around the state from other schools and getting to know them. Being the president of the chapter is a great responsibility but I knew before I put my name in the hat that it would be. It meant a lot to know that the teachers had enough faith in me to lead my fellow students.”

“Being Vice President of student council is also a position that carries a lot of responsibility because I was elected by my peers and I was chosen to help lead them. I take this position very seriously and I’m proud to represent Reserve in this way as well.”

In the end, though, Fletcher can point to one person that changed everything for him and that person is Aaron. Fletcher believes without Aaron teaching him how to be a better person and leader he doesn’t think he would be where he is today.

“For me it all comes back to Aaron. I’m not sure he or anyone will ever truly understand the impact he has made on my life. I could never repay him for that, so I will continue to help others and try and be a good example for others to follow. I know my heart is in the right place and Aaron has given me the ability to see where I’m most needed.”