

Impact Statement

Tiden Abercrombie, Grade 10.

Wallpaper, 2023.

Acrylic, paint pens on canvas, 24 x 18 inches.

North East High School, North East, PA

Unsung Hero: Gunnar Dybwad

Around the age of 10 years old, I begged my parents for a cell phone. My peers had cell phones and I too wanted to watch videos and play games. When I finally got my phone and my parents helped set it up, we were able to choose a wallpaper or picture that represented who I am or a photo of what I looked like and then choose the apps that were important to me. I was able to search for information at my fingertips. My mom said, she had to use books or go to the library to do work for school, I can use my phone and Chrome book to complete my work. Technology just like advocacy started somewhere by someone. When I read, Dr. Gunnar Dybwad's information on the website, it spoke to me and to who I am. I have a disability called autism. I wondered what his home screen wallpaper would look like and what apps were important to him and represented his life and legacy.

Dr. Gunnar Dybwad is considered to be the "grandfather of advocacy." He fought for the civil rights of those with different types of disabilities especially educational. He was a part of two supreme court cases involving access to education. On his home screen, you will find the scales of justice to represent his involvement. You will also find an IEP icon. An IEP is an educational plan that sets goals for students and provides accommodations so that students like me can go to school with my peers. I have co taught classes so a regular education teacher and a special education teacher provide grade level material and include me with my peers. The difference for me being more time to take test or having my test read out loud. My notes may be printed and given to me verse me having to hand write them. It these accommodations that help me have access to the same education as my classmates. Another icon you will notice is the symbol for Inclusion International. It's important to be accepted and included with others and be treated with dignity and respect. When I was younger, I was unable to attend my local preschool due to my behaviors and challenges and needed to attend a autistic class room. My parents had to send me on a long bus ride to attend this room in hopes of being able to improve my abilities and skills of participation and language. In the autistic room, we were occasionally included the other rooms and I made a few friends. In high school, I'm fully included in my chorus class and even got to go to district chorus, it was my first time being on my own, no aide, no parent. My family was so proud to see me perform and prove I am able to participate school related activities. I'm so glad my teacher believed in me and gave me an opportunity to sing. I think that Dr. Dybwad believed in people and believed in change and believed in advocacy and networking to improve the lives of those with disabilities like me.

Other icon's on the home screen are the Autism Society and United Cerebral Palsy. These are just 2 groups that offer services to families and individuals with these challenges. I have participated in my local autism society group activities like cooking club and Lego club, its nice to be around others with similar interest like my own. The ADA, American Disability Act, represented by the wheelchair icon is on his home screen also. Dr. Dybwad believed in rights

for those with mental and other disabilities and fought for laws to protect individuals with these differences and challenges. It's hard to believe that individuals like myself were once institutionalized and given poor living and learning conditions and had no voice to say that they felt unsafe and unloved. Another icon on my painting was the AAIDD, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. They give out an award in Dr. Dybwad's honor. It was interesting learning and sharing all the groups Dr. Dybwad was involved in with my mom who is my main advocate. She had no idea these resources existed. My mom has encouraged my love of art since I started to draw dinosaurs around 1st grade. She found drawing and art classes for me and finds contest like this which was offered as part of my school's history club for me to participate in. Even though I have autism, which makes learning challenging, I have my passion for art and will continue to pursue my passion just as Dr. Dybwad pursued his. I wonder what does your wallpaper look like? What apps do you choose or follow? I hope my art inspires others to make and choose their own "Wallpaper."

My project will be hung in the high school and if I get approve from the elementary school, I plan to share Dr. Dybwad's painting with the elementary school and help them create their own wallpaper drawings.