

My daughter, Carissa, was an intelligent girl with a huge heart. Her brother, Phillip, 20 months younger, was born with cerebral palsy; he was unable to walk or talk. Another brother, Todd, was six years younger, and he and Carissa played together often.

One day when Carissa was about nine years old, she started the Everybody Club. She was President and Todd and Phillip were Members, along with all her stuffed animals and all her dolls. She made membership cards and badges and wrote out "rules" –but the only real purpose of the club was so that everybody could belong.

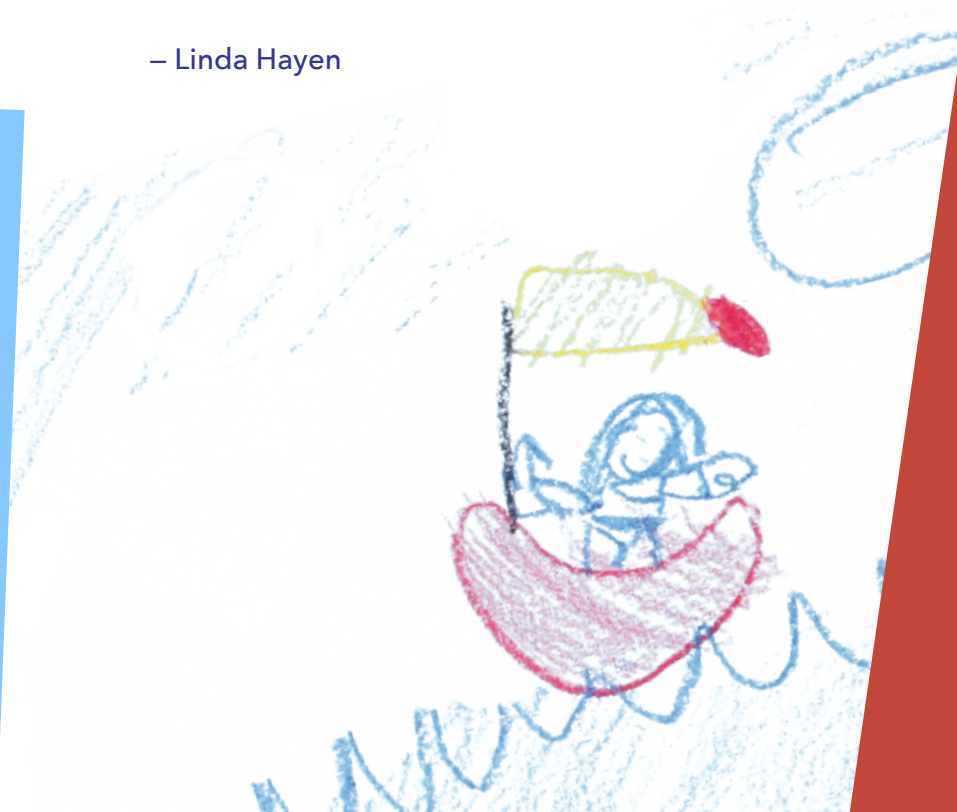
Carissa never lost that sense of inclusion and community. As a teenager, she was the one friends would come to whenever they were having conflicts. She was the one who would thoughtfully try to solve problems, both in her immediate world and in society. As a sophomore in high school, she went on a school trip to Washington, D.C., and decided she wanted to become a politician to try to help nations get along with one another.

Shortly after the D.C. trip, in May of 2000, Carissa died in a car accident.

So many years have passed, but I still often find myself viewing the world through her eyes. I know she would have been dismayed and heartbroken about the injustices that we see around us every day—racism, gun violence, economic disparity, and so many others. And she would have committed herself to making things better.

This book is dedicated to Carissa and her ideals.
Let's all have a club that includes EVERYBODY.

— Linda Hayen



you can do anything!
Love carissa

