

# Miami Herald

## This high school senior wants to make change through writing | Miami Herald

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SARASOTA, FLA.

Sometimes story ideas come to Seth Morano in his dreams.

And sometimes the only thing that comes between Seth and his latest story is, well, school.

"I want to write in the morning, but I have to go to school in the morning," Morano said. "I get really mad when I'm not really writing."

Morano is forceful and direct, his thoughts clear and straightforward. Born with cerebral palsy, Morano's writing process is slightly different than most — he uses a speech-to-text dictation software that allows him to speak into a system that registers his words onto the page. At 17, he is already an established writer and winner of Best in Show for his inspirational quote in Embracing Our Differences' annual Sarasota exhibit.

"Have the courage to stand up for what's right and have the wisdom to sit down and talk," Morano wrote in one of his 31 submissions to this year's exhibit.

Each year, Embracing Our Differences hosts an outdoor exhibit in Bayfront Park with quotes and artwork selected from submissions from all over the world. The exhibit runs until March 15 and is frequented by local students on field trips.

At Embracing Our Differences' annual luncheon, he gave a rousing speech about the power of writing and the importance of diversity and not relying on

stereotypes. He discussed how living as a disabled person has informed his own life experiences.

"A century ago, disabled people were relegated to their homes or institutions," Morano said. "I hope we can all agree that inclusion is valuable and right, yet one may not know the true value of being included until you depend on that standard of decency every day, like I do."

When Morano finished his speech to a crowd of cheers, his first thought was that he failed. His mother laughs as she remembers the lunch. He left the stage only to look around and see one guest of honor missing from the audience, Ringling College of Art and Design President Larry Thompson.

"I was swamped by the press," Morano said, recounting the tale, almost sounding as if he could grow accustomed to a life of fame.

Thompson's presence was so important at Morano's special day because Morano has a dream, though he's hesitant to call it that: to study creative writing at Ringling. He is halfway to his dream, having earned acceptance to Ringling's program. Now it's just a matter of funding.

Morano has limited mobility, so he uses a wheelchair to get around. It makes traveling out of state difficult, and it means he will likely have to live at home while going to whatever college he chooses. His mother, Jennifer Morano, said that's one of the positives of a potential career in writing.

"I'm very happy it's something he can do from home," Morano said. "It's a job that expands his brain and it's something he can do anywhere. He doesn't really have to be at an office."

For Seth, a senior at Booker High School, his future looms ahead of him, an exciting and uncertain next step. How exactly he wants to pursue a career in writing, he doesn't know.

"I was afraid because of my disability that I wouldn't find anything that I would like to do," Morano said. "Writing is that path that I've opened up and I want to continue down that road, but I just don't know where it will lead."