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**A birthday celebration where bullying and alienation are checked at the door**

Young woman with Asperger's invites community to celebrate her birthday, calling for an end to bullying and alienation

**Paulsboro, NJ:** Kayla Baylor invites you and all your kind-hearted friends to come celebrate her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Kayla, along with crowdFunnit™, believe alienation and bullying have no place in society. Festivities take place **Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 12 PM to 3 PM** at the **James G. Atkinson Memorial Park, 138 Bethel Mill Road, Sewell, NJ 08080**.

Kayla was nominated by her family to crowdFunnit, an initiative of the 501(c)3 nonprofit Cherab Foundation dedicated to improving the lives of those who are bullied and alienated, fostering acceptance, compassion and friendship through open-invite birthday parties.

Kayla did not choose to be different. She likes to say, "Everyone is unique. You have to take your own individual talents and run with them." It's a reminder to herself but doesn't make life any easier, or make her any less lonely, depressed, and even suicidal. Her birthday wish is that those around her embrace her for who she is, just as she embraces them.

Early seizures as the result of an unexplained breath holding issues at birth led to the need for a pacemaker just before her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. At age 8 she was diagnosed with Asperger's. Early intervention helped with some of the deficits, however it was clear as early as preschool that she was different than her peers. While other children collected dolls, Kayla's collection of specialists grew with each year, growing to 17 specialists including a cardiologist, pulmonologist and neurologist.

Her differences put her in a unique situation where she is too high-functioning for special education but too low-functioning to be with her peers. Same conundrum follows her into sports where her love of baseball was squashed as teammates made fun of her. Also due to being biracial she's been bullied for not being white, or black enough.

"The bullying started early on for Kayla, and wasn't limited to other children," says her mom JoAnn Colaneri. "There have been teachers, neighbors and peers who repeatedly called her names like 'stupid', 'weirdo' or 'retarded'."

However many times Kayla has been knocked down, with the help of her family and doctors, she rises up again. One avenue of strength is her participation in pageants which offer women with disabilities the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. *Miss Amazing, Precious Gem Mentor and Pure International* are just a few in which she can be seen raising her own crown against bullying.

Festivities are already underway as Kayla will appear on "Everything Special Needs Radio" hosted by Sue Shilling of WNJC on Monday, April 3, from 6-7 PM. Letters and packages can be sent to Raab Enterprises, 201 Harvard Avenue, Westville, NJ, 08093. And a shout out to the law firm of Sussan, Greenwald & Wesler, advocates for the special needs population, have donated the cost of the park space.

Kayla is over the moon about her crowdFunnit party – not just because it's a party for her, but because of the anti-bullying message being sent out to the community. Beyond making new friends, Kayla hopes to bring awareness to bystanders in that they will no longer stand idle but rather step in to help protect her and others from bullies.

Kayla, her family, and crowdFunnit look forward to hosting you for an afternoon of music, food, fun and friendship. Everyone is welcome.

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<http://crowdfunnit.org/2017/03/14/kayla/>  
<https://www.gofundme.com/Kayla-s-Birthday>  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/805822279574398/>

CrowdFunnit Crowd-Sources Special Events For Special Kids: crowdFunnit, a project of the 501(c)3 nonprofit Cherab Foundation, was created to bring people together, raising awareness about differences while fostering acceptance and compassion. Helping a friendless child celebrate a birthday is just an incredible mechanism in which to help make this happen. The party itself and any media attention it brings will help fight bullying at the root while the community connections will exist long after the party ends.