

# MY MICHIGAN HERO

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My Michigan hero is my great uncle, Jim Carr. He has devoted his whole life to helping others. He has taught me so much about the disability community and strives every day to change how people see diversity.

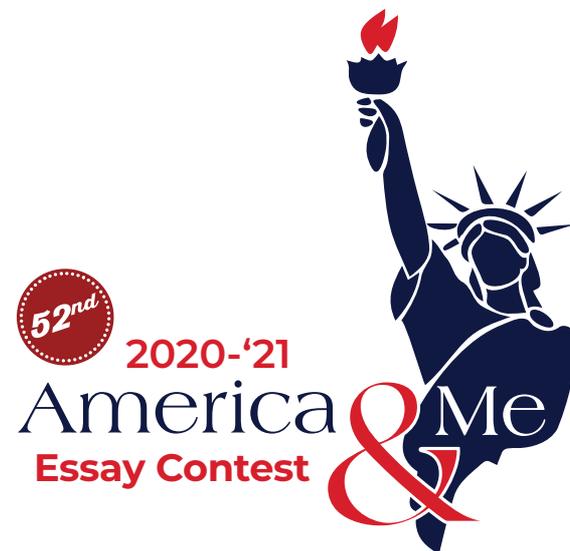
Jim Carr was born in Detroit on July 1, 1955, and lived and worked there his whole life. He has always loved Detroit and the people who live there and has tried to make it a better community. When he was younger, he had a speech delay that he eventually outgrew. But experiencing the struggles that came with this impediment gave him a passion to work with people that have disabilities.

Throughout his life he has started numerous programs to help better the lives of many people with disabilities. Along with being a Special Education teacher, he also taught classes to mainstream students to teach them empathy towards people with disabilities. He started a program called DASH, which stands for Diversity Awareness through Senses and Health. He had his students experience what it was like to be have a disability by having them use a wheelchair or blindfolding them. That way, his students could better understand the struggles of being physically disabled. He also worked with many people with intellectual disabilities. He started another program called DAMP, which stands for Diversity Awareness through Music and Poetry. This is a celebration for people with disabilities to feel special and is similar to an American Idol-type show for people with any type of disability. People can sing, dance, play instruments or perform any talent they choose. I have been to the DAMP festival and have seen how excited and happy it makes the people who are participating feel. He also started a spaghetti dinner fundraiser that raises money to help with the Special Olympics. Although he has retired from teaching, he still owns a record shop in Detroit and hires people with disabilities to work there.

When Jim Carr was only 18 years old, he signed up to be the youngest Big Brother ever in the Big Brother program. He was also

the first pairing of a white man with a black boy. I have read letters from this boy, who is now a man, describing the positive, life-changing effects my uncle had on his life. Also, when he was really young and working at a supermarket, they used to throw away food because the expiration date was getting close. So, on his lunch hour, he would take the food to an organization that would give the food to poor people.

My Uncle Jim has helped improve so many people's lives by bringing them joy, food, support, and knowledge. He is one of the most humble and selfless people I know. He has helped me to celebrate the differences in people and appreciate that we are all unique and special in our own way. He has inspired me to get involved and make a positive difference in the world.



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