



ADVERTISEMENT

NEWS

Finding Victory: Speaking out for intersex girl after attack

BY LINDSAY WHITEHURST ASSOCIATED PRESS

JUNE 10, 2019 05:46 PM, UPDATED JUNE 10, 2019 05:47 PM

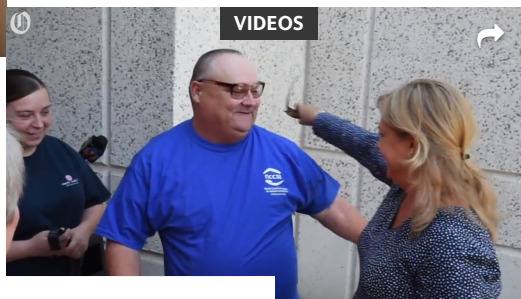


In this Thursday, June 6, 2019, photo, Victory looks on as she plays at home, in Ogden, Utah. Victory has XXY chromosomes. She also has a separate condition that means her body doesn't fully respond to male hormones. RICK BOWMER AP PHOTO

OGDEN, UTAH

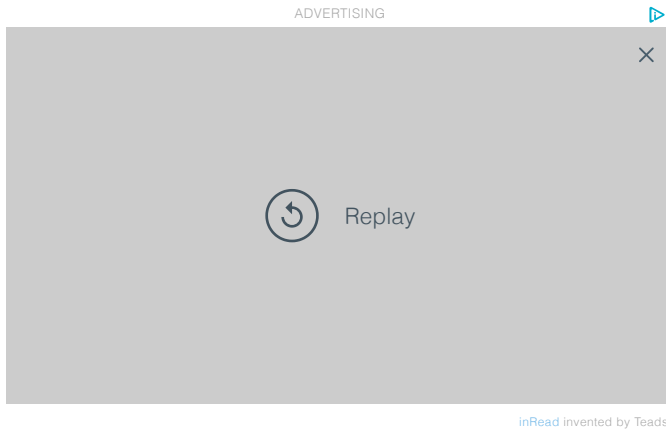
When doctors said her youngest child would be a girl, Amie Schofield chose the name Victoria. Then doctors said the ch

It turned out neither was female traits.



om Gaston County

So Schofield and her husband decided to call the infant Victory. The name is a hope for triumph over the secrecy and shame and the pain and discrimination suffered by intersex people.



Amie Schofield knows the suffering better than most: This was not her first intersex child.

Unlimited Digital Access: Only \$0.99 For Your First Month

Get full access to The Charlotte Observer content across all your devices.

SAVE NOW

Some two decades earlier, she gave birth to another child whose body did not align with common expectations of boys or girls. Schofield agreed to have that child undergo surgery that tipped the scales of gender to masculine.

But the operation did not settle the issue of gender in the child's mind, or protect them from a savage beating decades later.

With Victory, Schofield has been given an opportunity to try again. Her parents want her to be accepted for who she is. Instead of changing Victory, they are intent on changing the world so it is more accepting of intersex people.

"What I hope is what every parent hopes for their kid," Schofield said. "We don't want her to look at herself and think there's something wrong just because she's different."

Amie first married when she was young, and had her first child more than 20 years ago. Instead of having one X chromosome and one Y chromosome, as men have, or two X chromosomes, as is typically female, the child had two X's and a Y.

Intersex people are not to be confused with transgender. Intersex is an umbrella term for a number of conditions where internal or external sex characteristics aren't exactly like typical male or female bodies. They are a larger group than is commonly acknowledged; estimates range from about 3 in every 200 births to 1 in 2,000.

"I'm convinced every single person on this planet has met someone who's intersex," said Georgiann Davis, a sociologist at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas who is intersex and is the board president of interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth.

Some intersex conditions are known to run in families, though that's rare for XXY chromosomes, said Dr. Adrian Dobs, director of the Klinefelter Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Not everyone with the disorder is considered intersex, and most identify as male.



Stressed out while traveling? 13-year-old airport piano player hopes to help.

[VIEW MORE VIDEO →](#)

TRENDING STORIES

This 'zombie snake' found in NC pretends to be dead. Be careful picking it up.

JUNE 10, 2019 09:12 AM

Ohio tourist found dead in waters off Cape Hatteras National Seashore on Outer Banks

JUNE 10, 2019 06:04 PM

NC chef used \$25 lottery winnings to buy more tickets. Then he won \$1 million

JUNE 10, 2019 02:17 PM

Mecklenburg County is adding 30 miles of greenways. Here's where they'll go.

JUNE 11, 2019 08:36 AM

SPONSORED CONTENT

AN OVEN FIT LIKE A GLOVE

BY KITCHENAID



Why did Ariana Grande go off-script in Charlotte? (Hint: She knew it'd make Mom happy.)

JUNE 11, 2019 04:17 AM

THINGS TO DO

Doctors have long performed surgery and administered hormones to intersex kids to make their bodies more like typical boys or girls, but there's a growing pushback. Five states have considered banning surgery until they're old enough to consent, citing serious potential side effects, but most bills have stalled amid pushback from doctors' groups who say the proposals go too far.

Amie took doctors' advice and raised her first baby as a boy, agreeing to surgery to bring down undescended testicles.

But the onset of puberty brought hips and breasts, something that didn't go unnoticed by other teenagers in the small Idaho town where mother and child lived at the time.

"It's not something I really thought about until they started making fun of me," said Amie's eldest, speaking on condition of anonymity because of fear of violence.

The teenager developed a kind of armor: binders and sports bras, then layers of shirts for bulk, followed by a jacket that never came off, all in a goth style to create a distraction. There were beatings, and the teen developed a strategy: Keep a straight face. Don't scream. Don't say anything. The startled bully might just back off.

Amie Schofield allowed her child to experiment with nail polish and dresses at home, but in the years after the fatal beating of gay man Matthew Shepard in nearby Wyoming, she was terrified to go public. She aches when she thinks about those years.

"I wish that we could have been open," she said. "I wish I had understood more so that maybe I could have made it easier."

The move to Utah put the teenager in touch with other LGBTQ people, and for the first time exploring femininity publicly seemed possible. Instead of a beating, wearing a dress might earn supportive shouts like "keep doing you!"

That all changed one night in 2014. As they (the pronoun preferred by this person) walked to a Salt Lake City bar wearing a favorite tie-dye dress, a man shouted, "Where you going mama? You're looking pretty good in that dress!"

Never having been hit on before, they turned to say thank you. But the man's face changed when he heard a deep voice that didn't match that female body. He blew up, spewing gay slurs, and charged, weighted pipe in hand.

He landed a number of powerful blows. Blood sprayed everywhere before he fled, leaving the young person for dead.

A large gash to the head was treated with staples at a hospital. Police investigated, but couldn't catch the assailant, according to officials.

Amie was in the hospital after giving birth to Victory when she heard about the attack on her eldest child. She felt angry, helpless — and determined to protect her baby. She didn't want her youngest child to live with the secrecy and fear that colored her first child's teenage years.

"I don't want her to live that kind of life," she said.

Like her half-sibling, Victory has XXY chromosomes. She also has a separate condition that means her body doesn't fully respond to male hormones. Her genitalia are ambiguous, but due to the Y chromosome doctors marked the birth certificate as male, and encouraged Victory's parents to raise the baby as a boy.

Amie and her husband took newborn Victory home. The family lives north of Salt Lake City on a plot of land ringed by mountains where they raise chickens, goats and pigs along with Victory and her two brothers.

They decided to raise the baby without pushing either gender. There would be no surgery. At 18 months, Victory began gravitating toward dresses and bows, and loudly insisting on wearing

Gojira

Fillmore Charlotte
Charlotte, NC

Wed 6/12/19 at 7:30pm

Ugly Radio Rebellion

Grey Eagle Tavern and Music Hall
Asheville, NC

Wed 6/12/19 at 8pm

Twenty One Pilots: Bandito Tour

Spectrum Center
Charlotte, NC

Wed 6/12/19 at 7pm

Exhibition: On Paper

Cabarrus Arts Council
Concord, NC

Wed 6/12/19 at 9am-5pm

SEE ALL EVENTS »

her hair long. Their then-pediatrician Nisha Baur said Victory's parents took things as they came during her earliest years. "They were very open to just accepting whatever was going to happen," she said.

Today, Victory is a vivacious 5-year-old with a toothy grin, blond hair and a quick mind. She's mostly deaf due to a separate genetic condition, but communicates clearly with signs, some words and sheer force of personality. She runs around the house at top speed, cradling a reluctant kitten, perching next to her great-grandmother to read a book or running for the bus in a sparkling silver backpack with butterfly wings.

Victory knows her body is different from those of her mother, father or brothers, but it doesn't seem to bother her, Amie Schofield said.

Her eldest child lives outside the state. They recovered physically from the attack, but for months afterward there was a constant sense of deep fear. They retreated into masculine clothing, affecting as deep a voice as possible, attempting to grow out what little facial hair they have.

Knowing Victory was born intersex brought a sense of comradeship but also fear for her. "I'm scared of how society will treat her," they said.

Victory's parents share that apprehension. There are so many hazards ahead.

Victory's father, Michael Schofield, formally left the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shortly after she was born. The faith doesn't have an official position on intersex people, but is doctrinally opposed to same-sex marriage and intimacy.

"Will she marry a boy or a girl? Which one is right? Which one is wrong?" said Schofield, a federal worker. "I don't want to do that ... she's free to make her own choices."

Her parents would like to change the designation on her birth certificate from boy to girl, but Utah law requires a court order and some judges in their area won't approve the changes. Amie Schofield and Victory have gone to the capitol to speak out in favor of changing the law, so far unsuccessfully.

The deaf school she attends has single-user, non-gendered restrooms, but what happens if she changes schools? What will dating be like one day? Will she have trouble as she applies for jobs, or apartments, or schools? Could she also be targeted by violence? How will she feel about not being able to have children?

Her mother can only hope to teach her to handle these dilemmas herself. "It's not something I can save her from," Amie Schofield said.

But whatever comes, the family isn't going to hide.

"I hate the secrecy," she said. "She's just so smart, so full of life. She's just a normal girl."

[COMMENTS](#) ▾

0 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...

[Facebook Comments Plugin](#)

[READ NEXT](#)



WORLD

Hong Kong delays bill debate as protest crowds amass at HQ

BY CHRISTOPHER BODEEN ASSOCIATED PRESS

JUNE 12, 2019 12:14 AM,



Hong Kong delayed a legislative session to debate extradition bill as protesters amassed to block entry to the building out of concern the measure signaled greater Chinese control and further erosion of civil liberties.

KEEP READING →

Unlimited Digital Access: Only \$0.99 For Your First Month

#ReadLocal

Get full access to The Charlotte Observer content across all your devices.

SAVE NOW

MORE NEWS

NATIONAL POLITICS

Biden, Trump trade jobs in possible 2020 election preview



NATIONAL POLITICS

Sanders to outline 'what democratic socialism means to me'

JUNE 12, 2019 12:54 AM

NATIONAL POLITICS

Ex-FBI leaders to testify on Mueller report, Russian threat

JUNE 12, 2019 12:52 AM

NEWS

Prescription drug reform moves ahead in Maine

JUNE 12, 2019 12:51 AM



NATIONAL POLITICS

Confusion abounds as Trump's July 4 plans remain a mystery

JUNE 12, 2019 12:48 AM



SPONSORED CONTENT

When's the Right Time to Sign up For Medicare Part D? [↗](#)

BY WALGREENS

Take Us With You

Real-time updates and all local stories you want right in the palm of your hand.



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER APP →



VIEW NEWSLETTERS →



SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Start a Subscription
- Customer Service
- eEdition
- Vacation Hold
- Pay Your Bill
- Rewards

LEARN MORE

- About Us
- Contact Us
- Newsletters
- News in Education
- Photo Store
- Archives

ADVERTISING

- Information
- Place a Classified

COPYRIGHT

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF SERVICE