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Autism Inspiration

2011

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October 2011 - Inspiring Autism Story

Alex Koepfel



The "Inspirational Autism Stories" program was designed to honor someone with autism from the San Diego community. Selected honorees stand as an inspiration to others with autism, to parents with a newly diagnosed child, as well as to people without the disorder. Individuals selected for this honor participate in a live interview or fill out a questionnaire that asks questions such as:

"What are you most proud of?"

"What would you say to younger people just learning about their diagnosis for the first time?"

Our new honoree is selected and responses are posted on the ACE website to inspire the people who read their stories.

Alex Koepfel was diagnosed with autism at an early age. Alex has excelled in his academics, is learning to drive, and continues to master musical pieces and cover songs. He was chosen ACE's person of the month because of his enthusiastic spirit. His drive to learn new things and ability to acquire skills quickly has led him to become an exceptional pianist. He can be found on YouTube under PianoMagnet3. Here are a few responses on how autism helped shape Alex Koepfel to be the person he is today.

These responses were provided directly by Alex, now a 23 year old with autism.

What are you most proud of?

I am most proud of getting a high school diploma with a 3.24 GPA.

Do you have any special skills?

Yes. I am a good typist. I can type about 70 words a minute. I'm also a great piano player, and enjoy playing a variety of music, including Ragtime, classical, Billy Joel, Beatles, Vince Guaraldi jazz pieces and movie themes. I've posted over 100 hits on YouTube. And the last special skill I can think of is being a hard worker at the Bonita-Sunnyside Branch Library. My duties there include book-shelving, shelf-reading, which basically is putting books at the edges of the shelves in the right order, based on the dewey decimal system, and checking in books from the book drops and shipment boxes. I am also an excellent bowler, with many 200 games to my credit. At the age of 3 I was sight reading two and three syllable words, and at 9 years old I learned to type with proper fingering in only about three weeks.

How has having a diagnosis of autism helped you in life?

I've gotten help from a lot of really great people in school and at work. I believe that having autism has allowed me to concentrate on things to such a fine degree, that has allowed me to get very good in things that interest me... and not just the piano.

How has having a diagnosis of autism made your life more challenging?

I have learned to deal with hard things in life, such as getting a job, making more money than I did in volunteer work, and making new friends.

What are your favorite things?

Watching sports; my favorite teams are the San Diego Padres, San Diego Chargers, Buffalo Bills, and the Buffalo Sabres NHL hockey team. Also, playing and listening to music, and working hard at the Bonita Library. I also enjoy watching Wheel of Fortune, playing Scrabble, and video games.

What would you say to younger people just learning about their diagnosis for the first time?

"Autism is a natural thing. We can make a difference in life by finding a cure."

What are your hopes and dreams?

Getting a real paying job and a driver's license so I can really enjoy my independence with both. I have been on a job search for about a year, and I'm hoping I'll get hired soon. I've also been taking driving lessons from my mom for over a year. I've been studying the rules of the road, which will help me gain a lot of confidence in being behind the wheel independently once I receive a driver's license.

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