

Get Out There! Participate! Enjoy Life...the Benefits are Enormous! An Inspiring Letter to the Readers of Disabled Dealer Magazine

Hello!

I am sure if you are reading Disabled Dealer Magazine, you are in some way disabled or connected with someone who has a disability. If you are one of these people, how many times have you held back from either participating or somehow being involved in an activity because of your disability? Were you afraid others would look at you funny? Probably like most people, you thought that a disabled person might hold everyone else up in an activity.

As a parent of a disabled child, I went through the same feelings. I never knew how to answer curious people about my son's disability. I didn't want to be an inconvenience to anyone because I had a disabled child and knew that everything we did took a lot longer and would most likely hold everyone else up. One day, this all changed, for my son, my family, and everyone we encountered.

My son is Brandon Kucowski. He is now 9 years old and was born with Schizencephaly a disorder in which the corpus callosum is undeveloped in the brain. As a result, Brandon has poor gross and fine motor skills and is a spastic quadriplegic. Brandon can not talk, walk, or perform any self-help skills on his own. My wife and I found out about Brandon's disability when he was just six weeks old. A doctor told us that Brandon would never be able to function on his own and suggested placing him in a home so that we could move on with our lives. Devastated over Brandon's disability, we vowed that we would not abandon our first born by placing him in a home.

The first four years of Brandon's life were not easy; he constantly cried and was always uncomfortable. We rarely took Brandon out in public or to family gatherings. How would we answer when people would ask; "What is wrong with him? Why is he in a wheelchair?"



One day, when Brandon was four, I decided to try to take him out for a walk in a baby jogger. I needed to get out and get some fresh air after being stuck in the house with my son not knowing what to do with him. By age four, most fathers are playing tee-ball or soccer with their sons. The walk in the baby jogger didn't do much for Brandon; he continued crying and seemed uncomfortable. I then began to run because I was frustrated while pushing the baby jogger. Suddenly, something happened that never has

before. Brandon stopped crying. I stopped and looked in the baby jogger fearing he may have stopped breathing. As I looked in, he looked at me and smiled.

Now that I found something that was beneficial for my son, I did as anyone else would do. I found a good thing and looked for as much of it as I could. Brandon and I soon started entering 5 kilometer running races. Brandon's smiles quickly progressed to laughter and joy. Brandon's physical therapist told us that Brandon started progressing at a much faster rate once we began running together. I had a racing wheelchair built for Brandon that he sits in while I push. Since then, Brandon and I have competed in a full marathon, five half marathons, over 20 triathlons, and numerous other running races. Thanks to support from Accessible Vans and Mobility, a mobility dealership servicing PA, NJ and NY, we were able to help Brandon's dreams continue.



What have we learned from all of this rigorous activity? We were only hurting Brandon by keeping him away from everyone during the first four years of his life. Not one person has looked at us funny or complained that we held anyone up or got in their way. People are more than willing to be helpful and supportive if you allow them to be. Brandon's courage of wanting to be included with everyone else and being involved in activities that everyone else can do has motivated and inspired many people to push beyond their limitations.

I'm not telling everyone to go out and run a marathon or compete in a triathlon, because it may not be for them. I do encourage people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities to think outside of the box and find ways to get out and be involved in everyday activities. The benefits of doing things that you enjoy are enormous. People with disabilities have inspirations, hopes, dreams, todays, and tomorrows just like everyone else.

Sincerely, Ted Kucowski

Note: Disabled Dealer Magazine featured a cover story on Ted and Brandon Kucowski in January 2008. To read the full article, visit www.dadealer.com.