

## Committed to Her Care

Jackie's birthday was a very special day for us. She was smiling. It was her first birthday at The Phoenix Residence and we were eager to celebrate. We called Lauren, the program manager, and arranged for us to come out on a Sunday with cupcakes, party favors, and balloons to celebrate with her and her housemates. The day was better than we had imagined. Everyone was excited and Jackie was happy. She was so excited that she turned to one of her favorite staff and did what we call her "bug eyes." She got real close to them and made her eyes really wide—something we know means she's happy. We were thrilled.

As Jackie was growing up, certain things got *a lot* harder and transitions were even more challenging. Her world seemed to shrink. She stopped wearing her helmet, which meant no more horseback riding, and when her swimsuit broke, no more swimming lessons. When she refused to zip up her coat, it meant no more adaptive skiing. It got to the point where she only had one outfit that she would wear. Then, the big transition: graduating from high school into a day program. It did not go well. After a year in and out of the day program, Jackie refused to put on her clothes. It was heartbreaking to see her stuck in a rut, spending her whole day in her room or the bathroom. Nothing would get her to put on her clothes, not her favorite movies or her favorite foods. We didn't know what to do.

Jackie spent almost a year in a crisis home. She made some progress, but she still wasn't her normal happy self and she didn't seem happy at all to go back to the house after we took her on outings. We were looking for other options. Many places had openings, but often didn't have enough staff to take on another resident.

After a lot of searching, my mom thankfully found The Phoenix Residence. Now Jackie lives in a house with five other individuals and there are two others with similar diagnoses. Although Jackie usually interacts more with staff than peers, the three girls have bonded in their own ways and it has been fun to hear stories of them connecting. It's always exciting when we come into the happy, high-pitched noises of Jackie and one of the girls. She finally has someone to sing with.

Of course, Jackie continues to have struggles. A few months ago, her shoes broke—the ones she's been wearing for years. Jackie was devastated. She refused to come out of her room the next day. She wouldn't even come out for dinner. But with the staff's patience, they encouraged her to try on one of the many new pairs of shoes several times a day. She did come out of her room after that day and is now wearing slippers (a step in the right direction). Jackie can be very difficult (I know I'm her sister), but the staff at Carver House are committed to doing what they can to make her life less stressful.

We are so grateful for Lauren, the program manager. She has been so supportive of Jackie. She's constantly thinking of ways to help her and always listens to her. At a house family gathering in January, Lauren and my dad were discussing Jackie's setbacks and how much we wish we could know what was going on in her brain. Lauren talked about the progress Jackie's made and said, "I think this year is going to bring good things for Jackie."

It would be nice if a well-run and extremely resident-focused organization happened magically, but in reality, it is the result of a lot of hard work and funding. Your direct donations will ensure that The Phoenix Residence can continue to provide the excellent quality of care and dedication to the individuals they support. Please support this wonderful organization that makes a difference in so many people's lives, like it has in ours.

Josephine Fritsch  
*Sister to Jaclyn Fritsch*