

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:12

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

We are the parents of a special needs young adult with autism and mental disabilities. As a child, his disabilities were so abundant that we could gain no confidence in what his capabilities would be when he grew up. We could not imagine what kind of job he could hold because an employer would not be patient enough to give him a job. It was all we could do to get him to write one paragraph as a homework assignment and it would always require most of the evening to complete. We could never imagine how he would live away from us. He required prompting at best and usually hands-on to attend to daily activities like baths, prescription management, and meals. As family and friends of the same age matured and grew up, our son stayed the same and even appeared younger. At the age of 22 when there is no longer school available for the special needs population, the teachers told us these students were simply not going to grow in capabilities beyond where they were in their early 20's. We knew that as older parents we would probably be gone well before our son, so we took the best advice and planned for some long-term solution for him. And one more thing, we prayed.

We only wish we had written those prayers down in a journal or something because without having them in writing it is hard to communicate just how much the prayers have been fulfilled and then some. We prayed that he could be accepted into a group home with other young people like himself. We were not sure he could work but perhaps a group home could get him volunteer work. We moved to North Carolina and much to our amazement he got hired at Ingles immediately and he has not only kept his job he has excelled in it. When we go out to dinner, he is quite the celebrity as numerous people come to the table just to speak to him. We often hear that people go through his line every time they go to the store just to see him. Thomas has not only excelled in his work but at 28, his independent living skills are continuing to develop.

This past summer we bought a home in Cashiers for Thomas. He only stays there a few nights here and there, and he has had setbacks with an injured wrist which has kept him out of work, but we are confident that along with a live-in house manager he will be successful independently living in his own home someday soon.

*Prayer:* Heavenly Father, we ask that you reveal to us the full power of prayer. So often, we pray, and it just seems like nothing is happening. Teach us to be patient in our affliction and faithful in our prayers so that in time we can experience results that far outweigh simple prayer requests. May all glory be to God!

-Submitted by Tom & Kay Blackstock for the Twenty-sixth reading of Lent.