



Spencer Palmer

Spencer texted me from his cell phone to let me know that he had just sold 2 coupon books as part of his track team fundraiser. Never would I have thought Spencer would enjoy a cell phone, he dislikes talking on the phone. A cell phone has opened up an interconnected world for him, one where he can text his brothers in college, call and find out why Mom is late to pick him up, and be just like the other kids. Thinking typical is what we have tried to do from the beginning of Spencer's diagnosis.

therapy and Floor Time therapy until he was 9. He was included in regular classes for preschool, kindergarten, first, and second grades. In 2nd grade, when he was frustrated because he could not do the same work as the other students, we put him in a communicatively handicapped classroom for 3 years. During middle school he went to a private school and for High School he has been on Rise, an independent study program, through the school district for his academic classes and takes elective classes at Redlands High School such as art, drama, PE, computer, and piano.

It is difficult to know what Spencer will be capable of a year from now so we do not look too far ahead but adjust our expectations to meet his current reality and abilities. No matter

what he will be doing we have always known that he needs certain skills to be successful in life. Everyone has to work so we started with that. We started with an extremely challenging task of taking a single trash can outside to be dumped in the large trash can. The beginning hand over

hand, tantrum filled experience has turned Spencer into being responsible, self motivated and capable of complex independent jobs. He takes the trash cans out each week to the curb without being asked, takes care of the family pets, prunes rose bushes, gardens, and walks to the store for me when I need something. He has worked at the Live Oak Canyon Pumpkin Patch and Tree Farm bringing in carts, stocking shelves, and carrying Christmas trees out to customer's cars.



Spencer Palmer Continued....



Thinking typical, we let Spencer play Pokemon and watch movies all he wanted when he was little. What we found is that he could not be "typical" to do that. Instead of playing a game or watching a movie and then moving onto some other activity Spencer becomes so engrossed that he cannot focus on anything else. Finding other appropriate activities such as gardening, athletics and Boy Scouts has helped enrich his life and left his mind to be able to do homework and learn in class. Watching a movie once allows him to enjoy the experience without memorizing every line and replaying it in his head while he is suppose to be doing something else.

Spencer has been a member of the High School Track team. He has never won a race; in fact, I think he has come in last in every race he has run. Spencer says, "It isn't all about winning, it's about running the race." His freshman year he was honored with the varsity most inspirational player,

received an award his sophomore year and was again awarded Most Inspirational JV Player his junior year.

Spencer is expected to participate and abide by the same standards as the rest of the family. All 6 children are expected to do their daily and weekly chores, contribute to cleaning up after we sit down at dinner most nights, do their homework, treat each other with respect, participate in church, scouting, and sport activities. We help Spencer responsibly choose appropriate TV viewing, computer sites and limit handheld and computer games.

Finding food intolerances has been a significant help to many members of our family. At age 11, when we finally dared the elimination diet, Spencer said, "Mom, my headaches and stomach aches have gone away." I did not know he was having stomach and headaches. He has made significant progress since that time.

Spencer and a young boy with autism were swinging next to each other. The young boy said to Spencer, "I have autism." Spencer replied, "I used to have that but I got over it."

Spencer recently received his Eagle Scout award from the National Boy Scouts of America. He will graduate this spring from Redlands High School. He plans on taking classes next year at Crafton Hills College and volunteering at the LDS Bishops Storehouse. In a year he plans on volunteering full time as a service missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

