

# Spotlight

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## **WE SPEAK VERY PROUDLY OF OUR YOUNG ADULT ADOPTED SON**

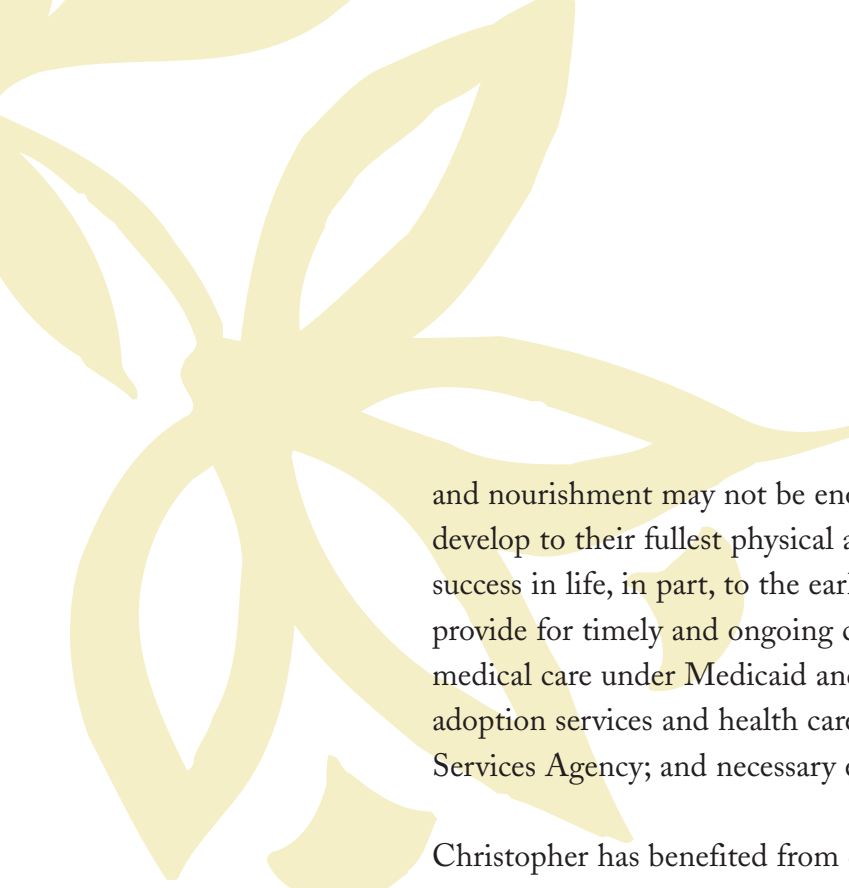
Christopher. Our son has disabilities stemming from a premature birth. Some of the issues include mild cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD), fine motor problems, visual-motor delays, sensory integration problems, chronic ear infections, and asthma. In spite of these and other issues, Christopher graduated from high school in June 2003, with a grade point average of 3.7. Since September of 2003 he has been attending Capitol College in Laurel, Maryland, majoring in software and internet applications.

One of the most significant characteristics of Christopher is his spirit of volunteerism. He does volunteer work for Progressive Equestrian Therapeutic Services (PETS), a therapeutic horseback riding program for individuals with disabilities. Christopher volunteers many hours for PETS before, during, and after the riding lessons. He also works passionately to recruit volunteers for PETS from among college classmates, high school students, support group participants, church members, the community, family members, and friends.

Most recently, Christopher and his siblings raised \$2,717.00 of the nearly \$10,000 collected for the June 18, 2005 Foster Care and Adoption 5k Walk/Run. The event benefited foster and adoptive families and children in the D.C. metropolitan area. Christopher spent many hours of many days soliciting donations from church members, community residents, and foster and adoptive parent support group participants.

Christopher truly sets an example of how our children can make a positive difference in both their own lives and the lives of others in spite of having disabilities.

Christopher's accomplishments also demonstrate that our unconditional parental love



and nourishment may not be enough in order for our children to thrive and to develop to their fullest physical and mental capacities. We attribute Christopher's success in life, in part, to the early commitment of D.C. and Maryland agencies to provide for timely and ongoing care and services. These outside supports included medical care under Medicaid and our family health insurance; on-going post-adoption services and health care coverage through the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency; and necessary educational services.

Christopher has benefited from clinically-based Occupational Therapy and Speech/Language Therapy from infancy to age 21 through adoption subsidy. He also received Physical Therapy (PT) when necessary. Therapeutic horseback riding services eventually replaced the clinically-based PT. During infancy he had genetic tests and CAT Scans to help determine appropriate medical care and educational services. Extensive educational services included Early Intervention beginning at age one, inclusion with one-on-one instruction and related services beginning at age six, and placement at age seven in a self-contained private school where he remained until high school graduation at age 18. Based on Christopher's disabilities, the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) funds part of his higher education costs at Capitol College.

We feel truly blessed to have watched our son Christopher overcoming health and learning obstacles throughout the past 21 years. We are grateful for the medical, educational, and social services which helped him make this possible.

*Roger and Dolores Blegen*