

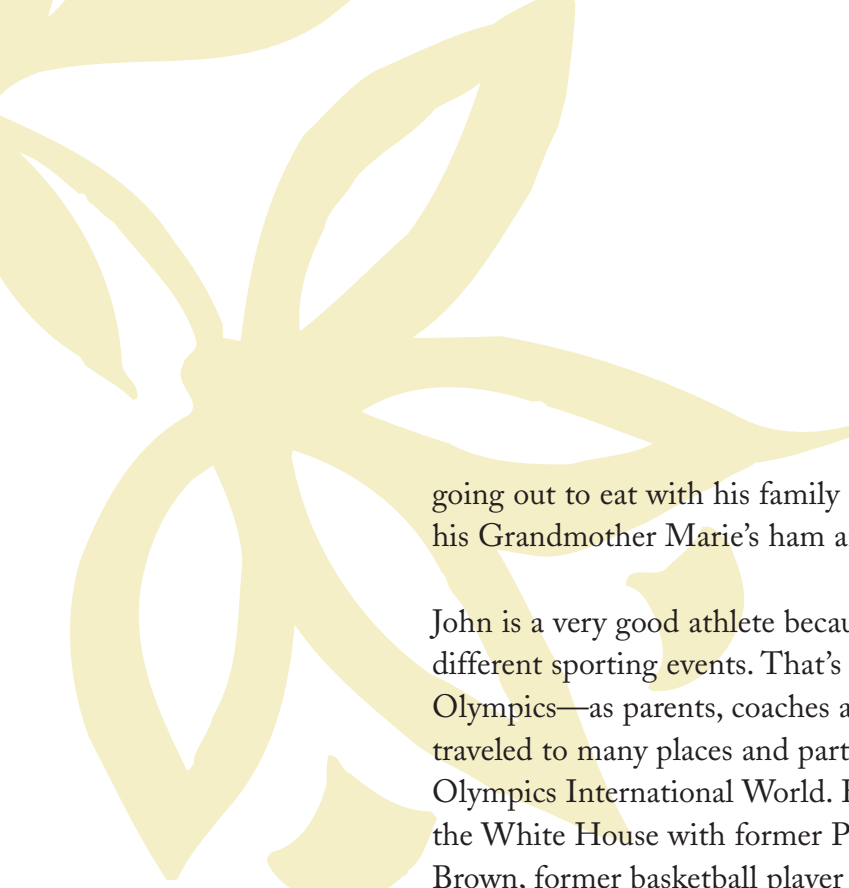
# Getting to know a young man who has a Special Smile & Laughter

**SOME PEOPLE ARE EMBARRASSED OR SHY AWAY FROM A FAMILY** member with a disability, but not us. We were chosen by a higher power and we will never turn our backs or mistreat our son; so here's a short story about a wonderful young man, whose name is John II; nicknamed 'Boo key'. John was born at Columbia Hospital for Women and was about two when we noticed that he was having medical issues. John has been diagnosed with moderate mental retardation.

We didn't know until he had his first high fever, which lead to convulsions one New Year's Eve holiday about 15 years ago, that this would be the beginning of his medical problems. He didn't seem to talk clearly and his language was more like baby talk. I can remember my prayers to God to let him talk and he did. As a mother, I thought that if I could figure out what he was saying that I would be his interpreter or defend John when others asked him questions or looked at us for answers and said to us, "what is he's saying." But, what we didn't know at the time was that his brain cells were having their own issues, and he could not relate to ordinary things in his life.

We put John in a day care center, but things got worse there because he was hit in the head with swinging doors. He came home many times with a big bruise on his forehead. We took him to the doctors, but they could not find anything medically wrong except for what they called "a lazy eye." We were not satisfied and we were confused seeing the dark forehead. We knew that something else was happening to him. We asked more questions from the doctors at Children's Medical Center and they finally recommended that we take him for testing at DC General Hospital. He was diagnosed with being borderline retarded. For a while he did well, but then he began to have seizures. He is on daily medication and he was prescribed 6 tablets a day but his neurologist has reduced that amount to 4 tablets a day; so that's a blessing in itself.

John is now 29 years old. He has many daily challenges such as reading, going places alone, understanding simple commands, etc., but he continues to strive. He loves



going out to eat with his family and likes to have big dinners at home and especially his Grandmother Marie's ham and sweet potato pies.

John is a very good athlete because his dad was one and has also participated in different sporting events. That's how we began working with DC Special Olympics—as parents, coaches and volunteers for over twenty years. John has traveled to many places and participated in three world games with DC Special Olympics International World. He has met some wonderful people, has had Tea at the White House with former President Regan and Mrs. Regan, met the late Ron Brown, former basketball player Patrick Ewing, many Redskins players, and singer Bon Jovi, just to name a few. He has also been on television. He now has so many medals and awards, pictures that along with his Redskins and Wizards posters on his wall in his room, he has run out space.

John has been a client at the Art and Drama Institute, Inc. (ADTI), founded by Dr. Do & Dr. Sky. He loves going there everyday and comes home with a play by play of what happened that day or what is coming up. This is John's new home away from home. John is a member of the Inspirational Choir and Moroccan Ensemble. He sings and acts, and works in the kitchen daily. He's also met a lot of ADTI special guests including Mrs. Altovis Gore-Davis, widow of Sammy Davis, Jr.; Chuck Brown; Monique; and so many other good people. John has been an active member of the Consumer Advisory Council at George University-University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities for about five years, thanks to Toni Fisher, the other faculty and staff.

So I'm saying that John is a person with many different obstacles but he is surviving with the support of his family and those around. We are still there for him as parents and with all these things in place for him I'm sure he will do the best that he can. John is gentile and a true gift from "God" and we are very proud of him.

So from John's family to all who have touched him on the way up, please continue to do so as he will continue to touch you. Thank you for letting us share a few of our thoughts with you about our son.

*Pat Mitchell, Mother, Parent Advocate, Volunteer and Coach  
John Bossard, Dad, Parent Advocate, Coach and Volunteer*