Your love changed Franz’s life and shared the Gospel with an entire village! Read this incredible story inside!
Andy Bush may not be able to ‘voice’ the Bible verse above, but he lives it. The first time Andy wheeled onto the campus of Family Retreat, we knew this young man had a heart for evangelism – he did “everything without complaining or arguing,” and so, he “shined like a star in the universe.” Despite his cerebral palsy, Andy’s winning smile and sparkling eyes drew people to him. They were curious about his happy disposition and why he showed such strong faith. Perhaps some expected him to complain, but Andy knew there was a bigger picture...

It was evangelism. This young man’s passion was for other people to know Jesus the way he did. As others hung out with him, Andy’s quiet, yet powerful witness for Christ was “blameless and pure... without fault.” No cynic or skeptic could be around him very long without capitulating to Christ — Andy Bush seemed to understand that nothing makes the world sit up and take notice of God more than when it observes believers rejoicing in their hardships. No wonder he won so many people to Christ!

What a strategy for evangelism! Simply “Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may... shine like stars in the universe.” This is the reason Joni and Friends is heaven-bent on giving the Gospel to every disabled person.

We understand the big picture; we know that God’s most influential evangelists in this crooked and depraved world may well be people with disabilities like Andy Bush. And so, evangelism drives every outreach at Joni and Friends — it’s the core of everything we do!

So, I ask you to please do three things. First, let Andy’s example inspire you to shine like a star in our dark world... it means no complaining :-). Next, pray that when we give the salvation message of Jesus, it will bear plentiful fruit for Christ’s kingdom. Finally, I will boldly ask you to give financially — we need your gifts to keep spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that many more disabled people will become evangelists like Andy Bush! It’s a crooked world out there... so let’s make the most of every opportunity to change it for the sake of our wonderful Savior!
When Hugh and Pat found out that their baby had Down syndrome, they were overwhelmed. Yet as Bethany (now 11) got older, they knew they did not want her to grow up as an only child, so they adopted Lily (now 9), who also has Down syndrome.

“Being the parents to two children with disabilities can be exhausting,” explains Pat. “It’s really hard sometimes. Our girls have yet to sleep through the night in 11 years.”

Pat’s transparency reveals the very real need for respite, which is why the partnership between our Cause 4 Life Respite at Home program, the University of Northwestern St. Paul and Joni and Friends Minnesota is so life-giving! Through Respite at Home, Christian nursing students at the University of Northwestern St. Paul are providing families affected by disability with the respite care they so desperately crave, and they’re using their internship experience to preach the Gospel in both word and deed.

Interns visit special needs families like Pat’s for 3 hours a week over the course of their semester – building friendships with each member of the family through activities like singing, dancing, Bible stories, and crafts. And while the interns share the love of God with Bethany and Lily, Pat gets some much-needed rest! “It gives me a chance to breathe, and I know that Bethany and Lily are well taken care of,” shares Pat with confidence.

Pat goes on to explain, “Life doesn’t get easier. With Down syndrome, you have to teach your child each step of everything they do. It can be frustrating; it stretches your patience. Respite at Home has been very helpful for me. I can trust that my girls can be with the interns and I can do the things I need to without interruptions. And it has been a growth opportunity for the girls.”

And Respite at Home isn’t the only way this special family experiences the hope of Jesus through Joni and Friends. As Pat explained after attending our Minnesota Family Retreat, “Family Retreat gave me a glimpse of Christ in a more profound way than I ever imagined!”

That’s what we’re all about at Joni and Friends… bringing families closer to each other and closer to Jesus!

Jenny is a single mom raising her 9-year-old son, Willy, who has autism, developmental delays and the after-effects of past trauma. She knows all too well how isolating disability and single parenting can be. She and Willy have been abundantly blessed by Respite at Home, too!

“I’m overwhelmed by the nursing students’ kindness and helpfulness,” Jenny explains. “They are so positive, always asking how they can help, and they make everything about Willy.”

Better still, Respite at Home makes everything all about Jesus! “Respite at Home has helped Willy grow spiritually. He listens very intently when the nursing students read the Bible to him.” And when they read the Easter story with Willy, he had lots of questions, including how the Easter bunny fits into Christ’s death and resurrection. The interns shared that Easter is all about celebrating that Jesus is alive today and that through Christ, we can have new life!

“They have given Willy the greatest gift they could!” declared Jenny, which is all of their undivided attention and the power of the Gospel. Respite at Home gives special needs families the rest and fellowship they need alongside love, joy and new hope in Christ.

Let us love not with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 JOHN 3:18
Gregory and Joshua are 8-year-old twins with multiple disabilities including autism, developmental and cognitive delays, and Noonan syndrome. Their mom, Jody, explains that their care involves 24/7 demands that bring feelings of isolation and exhaustion. But through Respite at Home, their whole family experiences the love of Jesus!

“This brings the boys so much joy!” shares Jody. “They get so excited; lots of smiles and giggles! And I see God through the nursing students. They’re being the hands and feet of Jesus, showing us God’s love. Respite at Home is an answer to our prayers!”

Other special needs moms share that Respite at Home is renewing and strengthening their faith, showcasing God’s provision, depicting the body of Christ in action, and bringing everyone in their families closer to Jesus. “Respite at Home is God’s way of telling us that he has not forgotten us. It’s like God is showing up in our homes!”

Thank you for sending your love into the homes and hearts of special needs families through our Respite at Home program! Your support shines a spotlight on Jesus!

To hear one intern’s powerful testimony visit joniandfriends.org/providing-hope today!

A recent needs assessment report commissioned by Joni and Friends shows that respite care is the most significant need among individuals with a disability, their parents and caregivers, and the family unit as a whole. Joni and Friends is meeting that need through Respite at Home and our many other respite events all across the country.

Interested in an Internship?
We are now accepting corporate internship applications for fall 2021.
Go to joniandfriends.org/internships for more information today!
New Life In Christ!

From Central California

When our Central California Area Ministry arrived in Haiti on a Wheels for the World outreach, no one even knew that Franz existed. You can see him smiling from ear to ear on the front cover of this newsletter. It’s hard to believe that Franz spent his first 17 years all alone on a cold, dirt floor.

Franz was disabled at birth. His father abandoned him thinking that Franz was cursed and would invite evil into his life. Soon after, Franz’s mother died and if not for the compassion of Franz’s uncle Albalo, Franz would have been left for dead.

Albalo took Franz in but also feared the voodoo culture of Haiti. He hid Franz away while he worked all day and night... for 17 years. No wonder Franz’s muscles were so terribly atrophied.

On the day of our Wheels for the World outreach, Albalo carried Franz out into the sunshine for the first time in his life. His neighbors stared in utter shock. They had never seen Franz before! While our teams perfectly fit Franz into his brand-new wheelchair, our Joni and Friends Central California team showered him with love and attention – sending a strong message to his whole community: Franz’s life is meaningful and valuable!

And once Franz was safely in his new seat of dignity, the local pastor shared the Gospel not just with Franz and Albalo, but with their entire community. On that day, God used Franz as his mouthpiece declaring we can all have new life in Jesus!

From Pennsylvania

Decades after serving two tours of duty as a Marine in the Vietnam War and being injured both times, Lefty attended our Pennsylvania Warrior Getaway and finally heard the words he so longed to hear, “Welcome Home!” Lefty never before experienced the love and acceptance he felt at Warrior Getaway, and although he had spent a year in VA hospitals that specialized in Post Traumatic Stress, Lefty didn’t receive true healing from the wounds of war until he attended our Warrior Getaway where he heard about the healing only Jesus provides. Through the relationships Lefty formed at Warrior Getaway, he made a sincere declaration of his need for Christ. And in that moment it was as if all of heaven sang out, “Welcome home, Lefty! Welcome to the forever family of God!” At Warrior Getaway, Lefty explains, “I found family!”

From Nashville

Almost 20 years in the Army and three combat deployments means that Andrew has seen and experienced trauma on a scale most of us will never be able to imagine. For a while Andrew attempted to medicate his war-induced Post Traumatic Stress with alcohol, but after attending a quilting class with his wife, he learned that making patriotic quilts helped calm his nerves and quiet his demons. And when Andrew attended our Nashville Warrior Getaway where he could gift his “Quilts of Valor” to other veterans struggling with the same nightmares that haunted him, his tragedy turned into triumph. “I’m grateful that Joni and Friends gave me the opportunity to come and share. I’ve always wanted God to use me as a light to the world,” explained Andrew. And at Warrior Getaway combat veterans find that “under the comfort of a quilt is the stepping-stone to battle the demons we have.”

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

At Warrior Getaway, these Quilts of Valor preach the Gospel loud and clear – bringing today’s heroes into the healing arms of Jesus and thanking them for their service in long-lasting ways.
From Chicago

Jason is 19 years old and has polymicrogyria cerebral palsy, but using a power wheelchair and having steel rods surgically implanted in his back (only to be removed again less than two years later) aren’t the only challenges he’s had to overcome. Sadly, as it is with many families impacted by disability, struggles associated with rejection and isolation are real. And the special needs families who need support and encouragement the most often find that their circle of friends dwindles more and more as the years roll by. “Our group of friends got smaller and smaller,” explained Jason’s mom, Dianna. “People just don’t understand Jason’s situation, which is a shame. Jason has so much love to give, but people don’t want to get close.”

Of course, when one member of the family feels the sting of rejection, every member of the family suffers. That’s why Joni and Friends makes sure to include the entire family in our programs like Family Retreat, Family Retreat at Home, and our online support groups.

Jason’s sister, Emma, is part of the siblings’ group at our Chicago Family Retreat. “I can relate with others who understand what it is like to have a sibling with special needs,” shared Emma. At Family Retreat, we’re sure to let every person in every family know that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made in God’s image – whether we have disabilities or not – and every member of the family is celebrated!

Dianna captured the heart of Joni and Friends Chicago when she said, “Family Retreat is a family reunion, and people are waiting for Jason to get there so they can be with him. We don’t get that at home.”

Jason’s dad, Jason Senior, went on to explain, “Through Joni and Friends we established lifelong friends that not only walk in the same path as us but face the same day to day difficulties. This has been a true breath of fresh air in the midst of what is happening in the world these days.”

Our Joni and Friends Chicago team helps families get closer to each other and closer to Jesus. Jason’s whole family chose to be baptized at Family Retreat, something Jason Senior said might never have happened otherwise!

From Missouri

Martina is living proof that Jesus is transforming lives and saving souls in the darkest corners of the world! 82-years-old and living in spiritual darkness in the Philippines, Martina had completely given up hope after losing her granddaughter to COVID-19 and then having a stroke herself. Like many Filipinos with disabilities, Martina felt the sting of discrimination, rejection and poverty. She seemed destined to live out her remaining years in despair.

But when our in-country partners tenderly placed Martina in her much-needed wheelchair, she saw the love of Christ in action. And when we gave her a Bible and shared the Gospel with her, Martina accepted Jesus as her Savior! Not only does she now have a seat of dignity in her new wheelchair, Martina has a seat at God’s table in heaven!

Please pray for our Joni and Friends Missouri team as they plan to head back to the Philippines on another Wheels for the World trip this August. May more lives be changed and more souls be saved!

There are lots of exciting events happening in your area, too!

In addition to Family Retreats and Wheels for the World outreaches, our Field teams are offering Respite Events, Support Groups, Church Trainings and all sorts of Family Fun gatherings.

Visit joniandfriends.org/events today and find out how you can get involved!
Because of your faithfulness, more and more children like Miguel in Brazil will receive a wheelchair, food, hygiene supplies, medical care and — best of all — Jesus! We had a God-sized goal for our May Match initiative, and you responded!

That’s right! Your gift was doubled and ministry is being multiplied all over the world! Thank you for putting your faith into action and for shining a spotlight on Jesus. Like Sandra, one of our Wheels for the World team members explains, “The purpose of all this is for people to be saved!”
31 Days Toward Deeper Healing

Beside Bethesda: 31 Days Toward Deeper Healing
By Joni Eareckson Tada

“This 31-day devotional covers the many questions I had about healing when I was first injured,” says Joni. “During those long ago days, I would imagine myself in John 5:2-9, sitting by the Pool of Bethesda with the other disabled people, waiting to be healed. Over the years, I discovered a much deeper healing than walking or using my hands. I found I could enjoy more freedom through ‘inside’ healing than anything I could experience on my feet.”

In this devotional, Joni writes about contentment, unanswered prayer, transformation through suffering and hoping in God. As Joni shares her own experiences along with profound biblical insights, you will discover the deep inside healing God has for you.

- 5.25” x 7.25”
- Padded hard cover
- 176 pages

$15

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