

Vision for Shaun Tomko
by Colleen & Charles Tomko



Our vision for Shaun is for him to become an adult member of the community who is interdependent with others who know and care about him. He will work, live and spend leisure time in typical environments of his choice, with the supports, services, assistive technology or other adaptations he may need to be successful. It is important to us that Shaun has those things in life that most people value, i.e., relationships, friendships and a sense of belonging. We feel it is critical that shared experiences with other children are maximized in Shaun's life to give him the greatest opportunity of forming relationships and learning how to use his abilities with others.

At this point in time, our vision is one of Shaun working in the field of computers because this is something he enjoys and picks up naturally and it is what he says he wants to do. He has also told us that he would like to work at Warner Brothers, but likes the idea of any of the major studios such as Disney, Jim Henson, Pixar, Nickelodeon, MGM, Paramount, or even a TV station programming cartoons. His greatest interests are the history of animation and film making, which has also expanded into Broadway shows and musicals, the history of toy making, comic books and the marketing aspects that go with them. He loves going to shows, art museums and concerts. With his interest in books, he could choose to be a writer or work in a library. He has read the biographies of most of the key people from Warner Brothers, Disney, Henson and is now interested in Hanna Barbara. He is also interested in the history of American wars. He enjoys music and recognizes songs by artists, he loves Karaoke and selecting songs for people to sing, and may enjoy working as a D.J. on the radio or a sound mixer in a studio. Because of his sense of humor, he may choose some type of entertainment work. He also likes to find details and may want to be some type of inspector. Shaun has a great deal of interest in Spanish and could be some kind of interpreter. He likes maps and weather and could work in a weather station. Shaun enjoys trips and the zoo and learning about animals and could be a guide or information provider. The possibilities are endless, but we do know that we don't want him to work in a sheltered workshop focusing on skills that his disability may limit him from achieving. We want his life to lead him on a path of using his abilities to function in typical environments with others.

We are not looking for Shaun to become "cured," "fixed" or someone else's idea of "normal." We feel Shaun is who he is, he needs to be accepted for who he is, and that his disability is but one characteristic of him. As with any child, we don't feel it is appropriate to only focus on his weaknesses or to require him to change before he can belong with other children. He needs to be given opportunities to grow and learn to his potential, and accommodations to meet his needs when his disability may limit his functioning.

It is basically more important to us that Shaun is given the greatest opportunities to develop relationships and social skills, then it is that he learns any other particular skill. We feel that learning how to interact with others by using his abilities and others learning to interact with him will greatly enhance his overall quality of life. This should not be interpreted as that we are unconcerned about his academic growth, but that we are equally concerned about his achieving his potential in both academic and social and that one should not occur at the expense of the other.

It is important that all of Shaun's short term goals move toward our life time vision for him. We want him to have dignity, respect, friendships, relationships, his needs met and opportunities to learn and grow to his potential, and most of all for him to be happy and allowed to enjoy life.

Family Vision Statement for Sarah Jones*

It is our desire that Sarah have a life of her own choosing, encouraged and supported by her family and friends. We anticipate and embrace that Sarah's success in life will be built on a community of people with whom she becomes interdependent, as is the case for every other member of society. We envision that Sarah will remain a strong spirit, full of love and humor, valued and respected as a person living her life.

We see our daughter as a capable, smart and loving young girl. We believe that she can and will succeed in an inclusive setting with academic accommodations and modifications that are unique to her. We strongly believe in order for our vision to be realized for Sarah, that she be fully included in general education. We expect that she will always be involved in an academic program that is rich in content and intellectually stimulating. We see Sarah with her peers in the Middle School and then moving onto the High School and being fully included throughout her entire academic day. We believe that friendships and peer relationships will anchor Sarah in a sense of community throughout these transitions. We believe that she has gifts yet unrealized in the area of the arts. We envision that Sarah will begin to explore ways she can express herself through the arts, drama or music and she will join communities of peers who share the same interests.

It is important to us as a family that Sarah have the same experiences as any 'typical' girl would have (i.e. playing with friends, sleepovers, being on a team, going to the movies, hanging out, staying out too late and getting in trouble, having an after school job, dating, getting a job, falling in love, living a life). We realize that for Sarah to experience these important moments in life, she will have a few close friends who journey with her, both in and out of school. We hope she continues to build lasting, successful, meaningful friendships throughout her years in Middle School. We see Sarah's typical peers as integral to her success in school; modeling socially acceptable behaviors, developing confidence as a member of a group and giving her a sense of value as a person.

It is our hope that Sarah will be able to more easily cope with new situations and transitions in her life. We hope that she will continue to learn how to be flexible in her routines, decrease her anxiety about changes in routines and through direct instruction and guided practice, learn how to be an independent, motivated and competent learner and friend. We would like to see her become more independent in reading and writing, approaching grade-level expectations. We expect that Sarah will be supported as needed, in a positive and respectful way, when she faces challenges.

We would like Sarah to maintain a positive self-image as a successful learner and very loved individual. We envision that Sarah will start to, and be able to, advocate for herself and her needs throughout her school years and her life. We envision her as a capable and functional adult, able to care for herself and access ways of getting support when she needs it.

She is the love of our lives and the sunshine in our hearts. We know that Sarah has a purpose to fulfill in this world and it is our mission to open as many doors, windows and perhaps the occasional 'blowing off of roofs' to allow her purpose to be realized. It is our hope that she have a life of value, purpose and meaning, and that she is happy and loved. We believe in Sarah's right to choose how she lives her life and that she is supported in the choices she makes.

We believe in Sarah and the life she was meant to live.

*Name changed.