

An e-newsletter of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities

The T. J. Turner Story

McCarty Center Team Rallies To Transition Patient To College

Determined. Driven. Motivated. Desire. Independent minded. Funny. Smart. These are just some of the descriptors used by the McCarty Center staff who helped 18-year-old T. J. Turner transition from high school graduate to university freshman; and they did it in three very fast weeks.

Turner, who has been a patient of the McCarty Center since he was 7 years-old, was admitted to the hospital on July 24 for a period of intensive therapy and independent living skills training. During his admission meeting, he told the staff he wanted to attend the University of Oklahoma this fall and major in broadcast journalism. He had made application to OU, but hadn't received his acceptance letter yet.

"T. J. has always worked on independent living skills when he's here," said Maria Greenfield, director of occupational therapy. "He's always wanted to be as independent as possible."

Turner, whose hometown is Chickasha, has wanted to go to OU since he was a freshman in high school. An internship with



T. J. Turner is all smiles as he begins his college career in pursuit of a degree in broadcast journalism. Sporting a class of 2017 T-shirt, Turner has transitioned into college life with the support of the McCarty Center, OU's Disability Resource Center, Oklahoma Department of Rehab Services, DHS Independent Living Program and Health Care Innovations.

the Chickasha Leader weekly newspaper doing general assignment and sports reporting stoked his interest in journalism. Sports reporting is of particular interest to Turner, who is a self-proclaimed sports nut.

Turner has never met a stranger. "I like meeting new people and talking with them. Because I like to talk, I thought a career in radio sports broadcasting would be the way to go for me."

"As soon as we knew what T. J.'s goal was, we organized to see what we needed to do to make it happen," Greenfield said. "The team consisted of therapists from speech-language, occupational and physical therapy, social work, psych, nursing,

and direct care. Our biggest challenge was going to be coordinating all of the groups and agencies involved in getting T. J. in school and supporting him."

One of the first calls the team made was to Dr. Chelle' Guttery, director of the Disability Resource Center at OU. "This woman is awesome," said Greenfield. "She became T. J.'s champion and continues to be. She helped remove all the barriers, physical and operational, that T. J. faced getting into school. I can't say enough about this woman."

Another very helpful resource in getting Turner set up in the Couch Center dorm was Jenn Doughty, director of operations at OU housing and food. "You couldn't have asked for a more helpful person in getting T. J. set up in a proper dorm room in such a short time frame," said Aaron Coolidge, an occupational therapy student from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. Coolidge was working with Turner while doing a clinical rotation at the McCarty Center.

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T. J. Turner Story

To get Turner ready for college, the team evaluated each element of his life and how he'd be independent. Questions they asked and answered were how would he feed himself; could he make transfers from his wheelchair to a toilet or bed and back again; how would he get to class; could he make and keep a schedule; how would he dress himself? For most college freshmen these questions have a simple answer; but for a college freshman with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair and has limited use of his limbs the answers were a bit more complicated, but it can all be accomplished with a little training and a lot of planning.

The planning for Turner began with several trips to the OU campus. The therapy mem-

bers of the team visited Turner's dorm room in Couch Center to look for potential safety issues and to determine what adaptations might need to be made. Then, with Turner, they walked to his classroom buildings to determine what obstacles might present themselves in getting into the building or classroom. Obstacles were noted and reported to Guttery, who got things resolved.

Maria Bratton, a speech-language pathologist, worked with Turner on executive functioning skills. These skills include: problem solving, organizing, making and keeping a schedule, setting reminders and generally getting ready to do these things on his own.

"T. J. has a lot of drive and desire that will help him overcome his limitations and succeed," Bratton said. "His biggest challenge will be learning to navigate through the executive functions we've been working on and dealing with being a college freshman."

Physical therapist Phillip Studebaker assessed Turner's adaptive equipment needs for the dorm and campus use. In the dorm he looked at Turner's bed and mattress system for maximum safety and comfort. Studebaker also trained Turner's personal care staff on the use of a hydraulic lift to help with transfers. And most important he assessed the maintenance and condition of Turner's power chair to make sure it was "road ready" for use on campus.

Marci Koetter-Manson was the social worker on Turner's transition team. She was involved in helping Turner coordinate his personal care staff through Health Care Innovations, a home health agency, fill out financial aid forms and coordinate Turner's support from Department of Rehab Services, The DHS Independent Living Program and Selynda Bass, an education coordinator for DHS at OU.

"It's magnificent how hard people at the McCarty Center and OU were working to help me get in school," said Turner. "The McCarty Center has helped me develop my independence. It's comforting to know the staff here is ready to help. It gives you confidence. The preparation here has been amazing."

Turner has a personal care staff of seven who work with him in two to four hour shifts during the day. Two of these people alternate being his suite mate at night. Turner also has a scribe who attends class with him and takes notes.



McCarty Center physical therapist Phillip Studebaker demonstrates proper transfer technique to members of Turner's personal care staff. The personal care staff training was just one of many steps in preparation for Turner's move into the dorm and beginning campus life. Looking on is Kelsey Bivens, one of seven people who will assist Turner.

The Building Block

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Transitioning From Patient To University Freshman

Turner doesn't let his cerebral palsy get in his way. He has a strong desire to be successful. His drive comes from a positive attitude and faith. "It's all about attitude for me, and I choose to be positive," he said. "I have a disability. God has a plan for me and my job is to discover what it is."

So, what is Turner's prognosis? If you ask him, Turner will tell you he'll complete college with a high GPA and launch a career in broadcast sports. Koetter-Manson sums up the general consensus of the transition team by saying that he has as much chance of completing college as any other freshman. The difference is he's more driven to succeed than the average freshman. And, if that's true, you should be listening to hear Turner's smooth voice on a sports radio broadcast in a few short years.

Boomer Sooner, T. J.,
Boomer Sooner!



C. J. Mays (left), a senior political science major from the Tulsa area, is T. J. Turner's scribe for the fall semester. Because Turner has limited use of his hands and arms, Mays attends class with Turner and takes notes. Mays' services are provided through OU's Disability Resource Center.



Members of the Norman North High School football team volunteered to help set up Santa's Workshop last Christmas at the McCarty Center. During the 40 et 8 annual Christmas Party children 12 and younger are invited to visit Santa's Workshop to pick out a toy.

Santa's Workshop In Need Of Elves To Replenish Its Supply

For 65 years the members of the 40 et 8 of Oklahoma have been handing out Christmas gifts to inpatients of the McCarty Center during an annual Christmas party.

It has been their tradition to make sure that no child leaves this party without a gift. For some of the children attending this event, it may be the only Christmas they have.

After the inpatients are given their gifts from Santa and 40 et 8 elves, all the children attending the party who are 12 years old and younger are invited to go to Santa's Workshop to pick out a gift.

Santa is asking for donations of new, unwrapped toys, games, books and movies for his workshop this year. His supply of gifts for this occasion is in need of replenishing.

If you would like to donate to Santa's Workshop, contact Greg Gaston at 405.307.2807 or ggaston@jdmc.org; or bring your donation by the McCarty Center Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Merry Christmas everyone!

Christmas Season Schedule

Lighting Party
Monday, December 2
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

OMCA Christmas Party
Tuesday, December 17
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

40 et 8 Christmas Party
Sunday, December 22
12 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.



The McCarty Center joined the social media world in September when we launched our Facebook page.

Find us on Facebook at J. D. McCarty Center. You'll find lots of interesting photographs and information about us there. Here's a sample below.



Nursing department representatives Keith Neugebauer, left, Kathy Patterson, Irene Maguire and Becky Melsek host a birthday party for the kids at the center. Each month, a different department plans and hosts the birthday celebrations.

Campers, crew said they will cherish experiences at Camp ClapHans

Summer camp for kids with special needs opened in June

It was a summer of smiles, swimming, s'mores and successes.

It was a summer of adventure, accomplishments, friendships and fun.

It was the first summer for Camp ClapHans.

June marked the opening of Camp ClapHans, a residential summer camp for kids with special needs ages 8 to 16. The camp is an outreach project of the McCarty Center.

Camp Director Megan Stanek said she was thrilled with the first year of camp and was encouraged by the comments she heard from campers and their families about the experience.

"Overall, it was great... getting kids together to play outside and have some fun was awesome," Stanek said. "I've had parents express to me how much fun their camper had at camp this summer and how they are looking forward to camp next summer."

The camp served 54 children from 17 counties in Oklahoma.

Five camp sessions were offered this summer that featured weeklong camps throughout June and July.

While at camp, kids had the chance to canoe, fish, gather around a campfire, swim, play field games and board games, ride horses, work on arts and crafts projects and spend a day at Andy Alligator's Water Park in Norman.

There were also movie nights for the campers, evening carnivals hosted by volunteers and weekly Zumba classes where the kids got to dance and exercise.



Greg Carter gives a big thumbs-up to the cool, refreshing water at Andy Alligator's where campers beat the heat during summer camp. Shown with Carter is camp staffer Matt Engel

Beyond the fun, though, were the firsts that happened at camp. There were the first-time campers who went from being homesick to asking when they could come back to camp next year. There were kids who tried canoeing and horseback riding for the first time and the campers with physical disabilities who took their first ride down a water slide. Campers also made new

memories and friends.

"I like camp because I get to be with other people like me," said Greg Carter, of Norman, who is autistic.

Greg said he hopes to serve as a camp counselor when he is older. Until then, he wants to come back to camp next summer and encourages other kids to give it a try "because it would be a great experience for them."

A sense of independence

Campers weren't the only satisfied customers. Several families said they were thrilled by the positive impact the camp had on their children.

Cheri Harrington of Norman sent her son, Jeramy, to camp because she wanted him to see that spending time outdoors could be fun.

Jeramy, who is autistic, was scared of bugs and showed little interest in playing outside before going to camp. Since camp, though, "he sees that outside can be fun," Harrington said.

She also said Jeramy is showing more maturity since camp, such as by being more polite when he asks questions. Harrington believes one of the

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First year camp

reasons why is because he bonded with his college-age camp counselors and saw how they interacted with each other.

“It was amazing at what a week here did to his personality,” she said. “It was so worth it.”

Ted Fitzhugh said his great-grandson, Ethan, loved the camp and still enjoys looking at photos of activities he did at camp.

“It was a great experience,” said Fitzhugh, of Broken Arrow. Fitzhugh said Ethan, who has cerebral palsy, had fun, made new friends and showed some independence during the week away from home.

“We know now that he may miss us (but) he can survive, he will be OK,” Fitzhugh said.

He was also thrilled with the camp counselors who worked with Ethan and the kindness and attentiveness they showed to Ethan.

“I was so overwhelmed by not just the care given but the genuine love that was given there to the kids,” Fitzhugh said.

Camp crew ‘did an amazing job’

Stanek said she was “incredibly impressed” with this summer’s camp staff, who served as unit leaders and unit assistants. The group included recent college graduates and current students from Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma City



Matt Engle (standing) teaches Jeremy Joyner that patience is a virtue when fishing and that “you have to hold your mouth just right” to get the fish to jump on a hook.

University and the University of Oklahoma.

“The staff really did an amazing job of getting to know their campers and making accommodations for them where they could,” Stanek said.

For example, camp staff learned campers’ favorite music and would sing along with the kids, read books to the children before bedtime, played card games with them and created colorful friendship bracelets for their campers.

Many camp staff members said they loved working with kids with disabilities, were inspired by the kids they met and made memories that will last a lifetime.



Camp counselor Michelle Sherman, an OSU senior majoring in human development and family science, helps Ethan Fitzhugh at the archery range.

Michelle Sherman, an OSU senior, was a camp crew member and said this summer was a powerful experience for her personally and professionally.

“I want to become an occupational therapist and being at camp this summer really helped me in that pursuit,” she said. “One of my favorite parts of volunteering at camp was having the J. D. McCarty Center therapists and staff help us out.”

“I can honestly say that camp would not have been the same without them. The individualized care we were able to give our campers was due to the training and the assistance from the therapists,” Sherman said.

Hospital employees who assisted camp staff and campers included nurses, direct care specialists, dietitians, psychological clinicians, physical and occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists.

Sherman said one of the campers she loved working with was Ethan, who “taught me so much more than I thought I would get out of volunteering at camp. His genuine and happy personality brought a light to the whole camp. Working with him that week really helped reaffirm my desire to pursue occupational therapy and work with this population.”

Sherman said another favorite memory was watching the campers become friends and help one another out. She remembers watching a group of

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Camp Crew

boys having a water gun fight and the group included some boys who use wheelchairs.

“They were helping one another out with the wheelchairs and looking past any disability and enjoying their time together,” she said.

“Our campers each come with a different story, but at camp they have an opportunity to explore, make friends and try new things that they may never have had the chance to,” Sherman said. “Being a part of Camp ClapHans was a wonderful experience and a great way to spend my summer.”

More fun in store

This summer’s camp season was the first for Stanek, who became camp director in April 2012.

Stanek said she loved getting to know the campers, watching them interact with the other kids and their camp counselors and seeing kids discover the fun of spending time outdoors.

“I know that camps provide a wonderful and much-needed connection to kids and nature and kids to each other.”

What surprised her was how powerful the camp experience would be for parents. Stanek said she talked with a mom who got emotional when she heard about how her son helped another camper get over homesickness and how he shined during camp activities.

There was also the moment when a grandfather shook her hand and expressed a heartfelt thanks at the positive experiences his grandson had at camp.

Other memorable moments included watching kids with physical disabilities get the chance to slide down a water slide and seeing kids learn a new skill like how to fish or shoot a bow and arrow.

Above all, Stanek said she loved getting to see the campers play and have fun together. “They just got the chance to be a kid.”



Camp Director Megan Stanek introduces the art of canoeing to camper Donnie Harrelson on the lake at Camp ClapHans.

Planning has already started for next year’s camp sessions. One goal is to add more water features at camp, such as sprinklers and misters. Stanek also has purchased Lego Mindstorms sets where kids can create robots and will buy some additional Lego sets after the games proved popular with campers.

She is also looking forward to seeing familiar faces next summer.

“I’m excited to see repeat campers coming back to Camp ClapHans summer after summer,” she said. “I’m excited to expand upon what we created this year and to build upon it for future summers.”



Open House, festival set for camp

An open house and fall festival will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. October 24 at Camp ClapHans.

The event is a chance for campers and their families, camp staff, donors and hospital employees to come together and celebrate a successful first year of camp.

Activities will include theme games, refreshments, a band and arts and crafts projects. Also, families will learn about some of the camp activities planned for next year.

For more information, e-mail Camp Director Megan Stanek at mstanek@jdmc.org.

