

## Success Story Gregg Kearns Trailways Camp



The Robert V. & Benjamin G. Miller Fund

*"He can do things that totally amaze us."*

Gloria McKeown has been through many ups and downs with her son, Gregg Kearns. Greg was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy when he was an infant, and has undergone a number of orthopedic surgeries and therapies since.

Gregg, who is now 41, lives with Gloria and her husband Pete, but lives a fairly independent life, working every day at the Community Resource Network, then coming home and doing chores. He folds clothes, takes the trash out, and even does yard work.

"Gregg is a very self-sufficient young man, even though he's in a wheelchair," explains Gloria. "He does not let being disabled stop him from trying things."

When Gregg found out about Trailways Camp, he immediately started looking forward to attending. Gregg attended camp as a child and enjoys trips with his family in their motor home, but Trailways Camp was his first opportunity to camp with his peers in two decades.

Trailways Camp is a partnership between Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida and the Robert V. and Benjamin G. Miller fund. The program is a multi-day overnight camp for adults with disabilities. The camp's mission is to remove the social isolation often felt by people with disabilities by providing opportunities for fun, friends, and support.

"Gregg was really good at getting other campers out of their shells," says Jesi Cason, Goodwill's Trailways Camp Coordinator. "He has great social skills, but he mostly hangs out with his parents. At camp he made some new friends, and hopefully he can hang out with them and do some stuff that guys his age should be going out and doing."

Gregg also displayed his independent spirit at camp during an obstacle course challenge. To complete the course, campers need to navigate across a twelve-foot-long log, a challenge for campers who utilize wheelchairs. Most get across using teamwork or through volunteer assistance, but Gregg jumped out of his chair and walked across the log on his hands.

"He felt very accomplished, and got to participate in an activity that everyone else in the group got to do," says Jesi. "I thought that was such a great way of making the activity his own!"

In addition to helping young people with disabilities make new friends and develop support networks, Trailways Camp is also designed to provide relief and support for families and caregivers. In many cases, parents have their first opportunity for respite in years.

"Gregg had a great time at camp. He keeps asking when there is going to be another one," says Gloria. "He met and made a lot of new friends, and he had a great time. And my husband and I got to spend time alone, which was very nice."



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