

# *Our Kabuki Story*

*by Amy Charland*



**Matthew Charland at his graduation**

I kept Matthew in school until he was 21 years old. In Adams County, PA they had a program where Matthew worked for the last two years in the LIU12 building. It is the special education center for the county. He and about 11 other students maintained the janitorial services for the building, as well as the small kitchen where lunch was served to the staff.

When he was 18 years old, I filed for disability. He continues to receive disability today. I am a single mother and this has helped us tremendously with costs. He also receives medical assistance. These were two priorities when he was 18 and will continue until death.

After graduation we tried to find employment, but with the economy the way it is, it is very difficult.

Therefore, he works in a vocational shelter workshop. This workshop contracts with local businesses and he does an assortment of jobs. For example, filling the "bubbles" with small toys - those are the items you get from the bubble gum machines. He also packs hangers, pretzels, tiles, etc. His favorite job is packing pretzels for the Snyder's company. He loves doing that. Jobs are assigned to the staff by abilities and speed. Matthew is the highest paid employee at the facility. He earns 5 star ratings in his employment ratings. He is an excellent employee. We are currently looking for employment outside with a job coach. We are on a waiting list for one of the school cafeterias. This would be the best for him because of its hours and the availability of transportation. I work in the school system so it will be a benefit to the family as well.

Matthew is transported to and from work on the ACTA bus system. It is a transportation program for those who are disabled. It picks him up at the house and takes him to and from work which is one town over from us. He has to ride about 1-1.5 hours each way, but Matthew never complains. He gets to talk to the bus driver and socialize.

He continues to participate in Special Olympics. Bowling is his favorite. He also attends the Life Skills Outings which are once a week each month where a group of them go to dinner, bowling, bingo, etc. This provides Matthew with social situations without his mother. He feels independent and loves doing it.

Matthew continues to live home for now. He is only 22 years old. As he gets older (and I do), I will consider group housing. I have a 15 year old daughter, so as long as I have her, Matthew will remain at home. They are very close and watch out for each other.

I continue to take care of Matthew's medical needs. They are minimum but I over see the bulk of his needs. He does have a caseworker as well. But she knows that Mom is on top of things with Matthew. I continue to cook for Matthew and do his laundry. I wash his hair and brush his teeth once a day. I cut his meat for him. He still needs assistance in some areas.