

# NATHAN'S JOURNEY



Hello Friends,

We would like you to meet our core member, Nathan, who has successfully made the transition from living with his parents and having them provide for all of his needs, to easing into Friendship Ark's Day Habilitation services and venturing out into the community with staff, to now living in a Friendship Ark home with four housemates and 24-hour staff available to assist him.



Nathan has a sweet demeanor and if he could share his passions with you, this is what Nathan might tell you:

"I love it when staff plays the guitar for me; just hearing the music makes me smile and relax. I like to sing, and my mom and some of my staff will tell you that I have a very nice voice and can really carry a tune, but I have to be quite comfortable with you before I will share this talent. You can also make me happy by singing me a song, and I like it even better if you choreograph it, make it quirky, or use people that I know as characters. I love to hear myself say words like 'whale's tales' and 'Miss Frizzle.' If I could have only one mode of transportation, it would be a train! Trains are my favorite – especially the locomotives – steam, electric, diesel. I LOVE THEM ALL! Did you know that there is a circus train where the giraffe goes up and down between the tunnels? It is great!! My favorite things to eat are McDonald's fries or a burger at Five Guys with Daddy!"

My family would like to tell you more about our journey to services with Friendship Ark:

**FIRST STOP: CONNECTICUT** Nathan lived with his mom and dad in Connecticut for the first 23 years of his life. During this time he received Day Habilitation services.

**SECOND STOP: AMES, IOWA** We moved to the Ames area in 2016 and started to investigate social services for Nathan in our new home. After consulting with Mainstream Living and Story County Human Services, we determined that Friendship Ark seemed to be a good choice for initiating Day Services for Nathan.

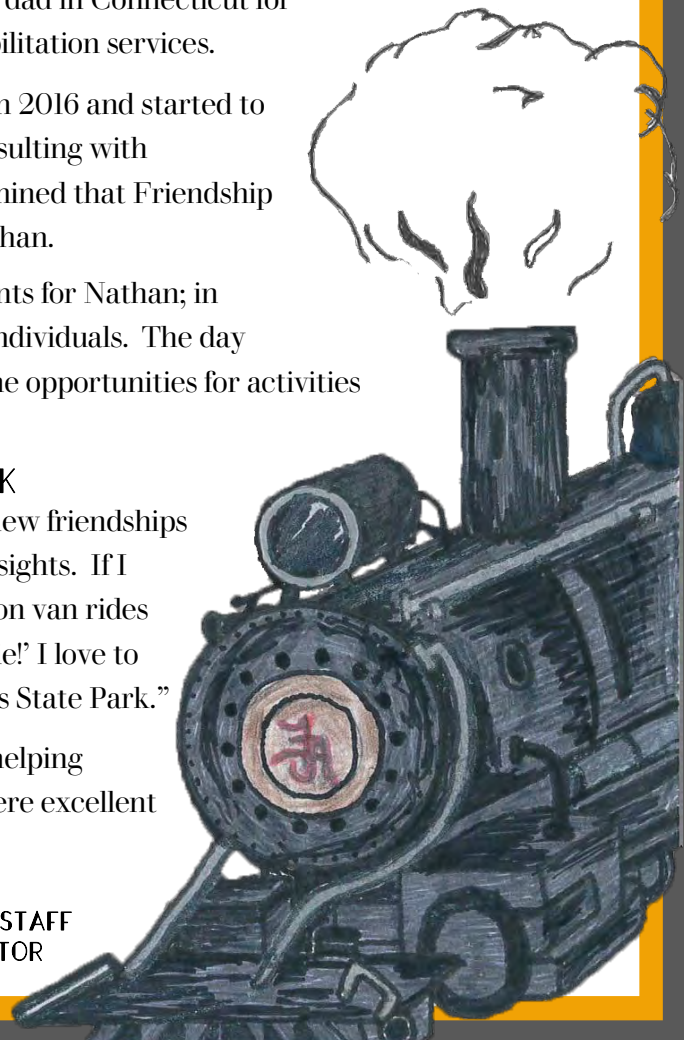
We had no illusions about the availability of group home placements for Nathan; in Connecticut, the waiting list for placements was more than 700 individuals. The day programming that Friendship Ark offered would give Nathan some opportunities for activities that we, as his parents, could not provide.

**THIRD STOP: DAY HABILITATION WITH FRIENDSHIP ARK**

Nathan: "My favorite things about Day Habilitation are building new friendships with my peers and going for drives in the country to see different sights. If I don't see at least one cow on our ride, I feel cheated. Sometimes on van rides I'm in the mood for listening to music. 'Rock and Roll will never die!' I love to visit the train depot in Boone, antique malls, Goodwill, and Ledges State Park."

Nathan's parents note that there were some initial challenges in helping Nathan adapt to the new Day Habilitation setting, but the staff were excellent in defusing any issues that came up.

ARTWORK BY FRIENDSHIP ARK STAFF  
DARRELL SMITH, COORDINATOR



## LAST STOP: RESIDENTIAL SUPPORTED COMMUNITY LIVING WITH FRIENDSHIP ARK

Nathan's Parents: "Once Nathan received his Waiver funding, he became eligible for residential placement. Based on the relationships Nathan had formed with Friendship Ark staff during the day program, we felt he might fit in well in a Friendship Ark home. We were able to visit a couple of different homes with Friendship Ark and found one that seemed like a good fit, and has continued to be a good placement after a full year."

Nathan: "Moving to a home with Friendship Ark was a big deal for me, and a little scary, living independently from my parents for the first time. I love having my own bedroom in my home, where I can watch movies, look at train books, and sort my DVDs. I also like to spend time with my housemates. One of them enjoys trains and farm machinery just like I do, and we spend time watching and playing with my John Deere train set that staff set up for us in the basement."

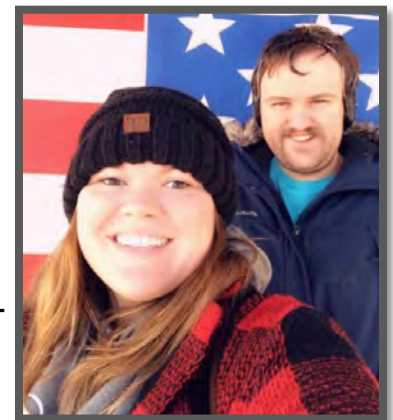
According to his dad, Nathan seems happy and enjoys his roommates. He reports that Nathan was a little overweight living with them, but is now at a healthy

weight and an earlier diagnosis of pre-diabetes has been reversed. They point out that the staff at Nathan's home make sure he eats healthy, which is something they tell us they are very grateful for.

**Nathan's parents: "We are so happy that Nathan has such a caring environment. It means the world to us that he is as happy as he can be. After being Nathan's caregivers for 26 years, we now have more freedom, although, due to COVID, those freedoms are limited, we sleep in now!"**

Nathan: "Thank you for letting me tell you about myself and learning about my journey. Maybe I will get to meet you in person out and about in the Ames community sometime after the pandemic is better contained. For now, I need to stay safe by keeping my distance."

A lot of adults with intellectual disabilities face a journey similar to Nathan's, and many of them are waiting on a spot for placement. We have not known a time when we did not have a waiting list.



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# NATHAN'S JOURNEY

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