

The Golden Heart

By: Madyson Redden

It's not easy living the life that I live, but I thank the lord every day that I do have the life that I have. I had several miscarriages before my little miracle. When my husband, Charles, and I found out we were having a little baby boy we were so excited we couldn't contain it. When I went to the OBGYN one evening they told me that the baby will probably have some complications. The doctor came in and asked me if I wanted to consider abortion or adoption. The first thing that came to my mind to say was "I don't care about any complications he is still my son, and nothing will change that." What I didn't notice at that moment was that I had screamed that aloud for everyone in the doctor's office to hear. I could feel my face turning red, so I just decided to leave and go home.

When our precious Nathaniel was born we were told that he was going to be paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of his life. The worst thing I can remember thinking was that I wouldn't be able to see my baby take his first steps. It was hard trying to find a wheelchair specialized for him while he was 1 year old until the time he was 4 then we had to invest in a new chair. This cycle happened every four years on a continuous search for a wheelchair fit for him. When he was 7 we figured that it was time for him to start school. The first couple of days he came home crying and when I asked him what was wrong, he said "everyone hates me. They think I am a monster because I can't walk." Hearing that come from my child broke my heart. I decided that I was going to start going to school with him. The first day I went to the school with Nathaniel the principal, Mr. Gomez, stopped me in the middle of the hallway. He asked me, "how come you're the only parent I see in these hallways, I do not think that it is parent teacher conference day." I said, "no it is not a parent teacher conference day I am just here with my son." He then said, "well I am sure that all of the other mothers would love to walk around with there child at school all day and I am afraid that I can not let you do so." As he had finished his sentence Nathaniel's teacher stopped in the middle of the hallway and told Mr. Gomez that my son was a handicapped student. After that had been brought to his attention he apologized and let me go on with my day.

On the third week that I had been going to school with Nathaniel I saw something that was incredible. It was lunch time and I was sitting at the table where the teachers sat so I could give my son some space. Without being asked a little boy walked over to the table that I had sat Nathaniel at and sat down to eat with him. I overheard the little boy ask, "why do you look so sad?" my dear son answered by saying, "nobody likes me, and no one will ever like me." The little boy then said, "what do you mean I like you." Afterwards they sat there in silence and ate their lunch. Breaking the silence Nathaniel asked, "what is your name?" the boy replied saying, "my name is Dillion, and may I ask what yours is?" "Nathaniel, my name is Nathaniel." He said. At that time, I walked over to take him outside so that he could get fresh air while the other kids played on the playground. Dillion walked over and sat in the bench next to Nathaniel, "do you want to come play with me?" he said. "I can't because I can't walk" said Nathaniel. Dillion said, "that doesn't mean anything, we can use our imagination and do whatever we want to." After recess was over it was naptime then everyone was dismissed to go home. Before we were dismissed that day, Dillion came over to me and asked if I was Nathaniel's mom. When I said yes, a big smile came upon his face as he asked me if he could come over to his house to play. I said, "sure, you can come over anytime you want to if your parents will allow you to." From that day on Dillion came to

our house to play with Nathaniel every day and we didn't mind at all. They have known each other since that day when a kind hearted, 7-year-old boy boosted my son's self-confidence.

Before I even knew it, my little baby boy was graduating high school with his best pal by his side. It was hard to believe that eleven years ago those two rotten boys met each other and from that day on they were inseparable. I will never forget the emotion that I felt when I saw Dillion rolling our little miracle down the isle so that he could get his diploma. It was like I had two sons graduating that day. Nothing stopped Nathaniel from achieving his goals. With his amazing effort he finished third in his class, first in the school's para-athletics program and got both a para-athletic and academic scholarship to the University of California and Los Angeles (UCLA). I know that without Dillion, Nathaniel probably wouldn't have the courage that he has today. I knew from the beginning that the little boy who ate lunch with Nathaniel that day had a heart of gold. Just a year later we were all sitting in the stands of the 400m wheelchair racing event at the Paralympics cheering Nathaniel on. The one person that he chose to go down to the track to cheer him on was Dillion of course and nobody had a problem with that because everyone knew that he had a "golden heart".