

Record

304

File Number

10271

Author: Unknown

Title: Natural ties teach full citizenship

Original source: Families and Disability Newsletter Volume 1 Number 2, Fall

Resource type: Written

Publication Date: 01/01/87

Publisher Info: Beach Center

**Abstract**

This short article describes one aspect of Jay Turnbull's life, a young man who has developed friendships with fraternity members who are part of his supported employment program within the University. The fraternity members describe what knowing Jay has meant to them. **Keyword: Friendship**

# Natural Ties Teach Full Citizenship

Jay Turnbull's picture is in the exact centre of the pledge class rows in the University of Kansas chapter of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity's 1988-89 composite photograph. But Jay is not a college student. He is a graduate of a special education program for people with developmental disabilities and a supported employee at the university, but most of all he is a young man who enjoys hanging out with his friends just as most people his age do.

Last school year, while he was still living at home with his parents, Jay (called "J.T." at SAE) spent at least two afternoons and evenings a week at the fraternity house. This year, Jay has his own house where he lives with two of his fraternity buddies, Pat Hughes and Cory Royer. "J.T.'s house" is now where his, Pat's, and Cory's friends hang out. They have formed their own community as a result of admitting Jay to full citizenship status within SAE.

---

---

## **They have formed their own community as a result of admitting Jay to full citizenship status.**

---

---

It all started when the SAE resident educational advisor, Chuck Rhodes, a KU graduate student working with the Beach Center on Families and Disability, took Jay to the SAE house one afternoon to meet his roommate and other fraternity members. Several members, including Pat, were listening to James Taylor's music - a favorite of Jay's. Jay began to sing along, others joined in, and friendship began. In a few weeks Jay became an honorary member of SAE.

Jay enjoys spending time with his new friends, wearing his SAE sweatshirts and tee-shirts, and

participating in fraternity activities. He also pays social dues and meal-plan tickets. But he's not the only one who has benefited. The fraternity members are enthusiastic about the program and what it has meant to them.

In their words:

- "When we first started working with Jay, I was somewhat sceptical. I had never been around someone with mental retardation, and I did not know what to expect or how to treat him. Now, after spending time with Jay, I realize that my ignorance was keeping me from becoming friends with a super person." (J.R. Rielly, SAE chapter president)

- "During the short time that I have come to know Jay, I have learned a lot about myself and the world around me. I have come to the realization just how shallow people in general really are. If we all just opened our hearts a little and let someone like Jay into our lives, maybe we could put an end to all the hatred and discrimination there is in the world." (Troy Lewis, SAE)

- "J.T.'s my buddy, my pal. And he's really part of our house. There is no problem with him eating there or sleeping over or partying. Jay's in the community, but, with us, he can participate in the same kind of life as the rest of us. There's no difference really. All the differences are on the surface." (Pat Hughes, SAE)

The SAE national is so impressed with the program that it is helping to replicate it nationally in many of SAE's 200-plus chapters. The Beach Center is working with them on this project and can let you have a brochure on "Natural Ties."