



Huntsville's train station, now a museum, is fun to visit

Treat Others Kindly



Medals show Jason's interest in sports and chess.

Jason Alford of Huntsville, Alabama



BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
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Talk to anyone in the Winchester Ward about 11-year-old Jason Alford, and they'll tell you he's helpful. He shows up early to prepare for activities and he stays after to clean up. They may also tell you that he loves to read scriptures, enjoys music and art, and has a happy, positive attitude. But more than anything, they'll tell you that he's kind—kind to his brother and his mother.



Jason uses this telescope to look at stars and planets. He also looks up to his brother, Alex and his mother, Mara.

Jason's 13-year-old brother, Alex, has autism. That means he has a difficult time dealing with changes and interacting with others. "He's smart, but he thinks slowly," Jason explains. "He's gentle and softhearted. He usually gives smiles and hugs."

But he can also get upset, so Jason has learned how to calm him down, and when to get help from an adult. He has also helped Alex learn to say "sorry" or "excuse me," because sometimes he will eat too fast and burp, or bump into people without meaning to.

"Being a friend with my brother has taught me to be patient, because sometimes you have to have a lot of patience with him," Jason says. "But I also know he is watching out for me. If he

thinks I'm in trouble, he'll say, 'Are you OK?' and he'll check on me. If you want to know the truth, *he* has taught *me* how to be kind."

Jason goes most places Alex goes, often explaining to people what autism is and how they can include Alex in activities. "Even though he has autism, he still has feelings," Jason says. "I hope people will understand that." The brothers like to play hide-and-seek, color with crayons, play checkers, read books, and especially go swimming together. "We play tag in the water," Jason says. "Except instead of tagging him, I splash him. Then he has to come and splash me."

"My mother has taught me faith, obedience, and how to live my life," Jason says. "She works hard, but she always has time to care about me. So I try to do everything I can to help her." That includes keeping his room clean, making dinner sometimes, doing homework without being asked, and of course keeping an eye on his brother.

"Jason has been very helpful to me," says his mother. "There are times when he asks, 'Why is my brother autistic?' And there are times when he says, 'Mom, you're giving more attention to him than to me.' I explain to him that I love them both the same. It's like, 'You are my blue color and Alex is my red color.' But my love for blue and red is the same."

Checkers is one of Jason and Alex's favorite games.





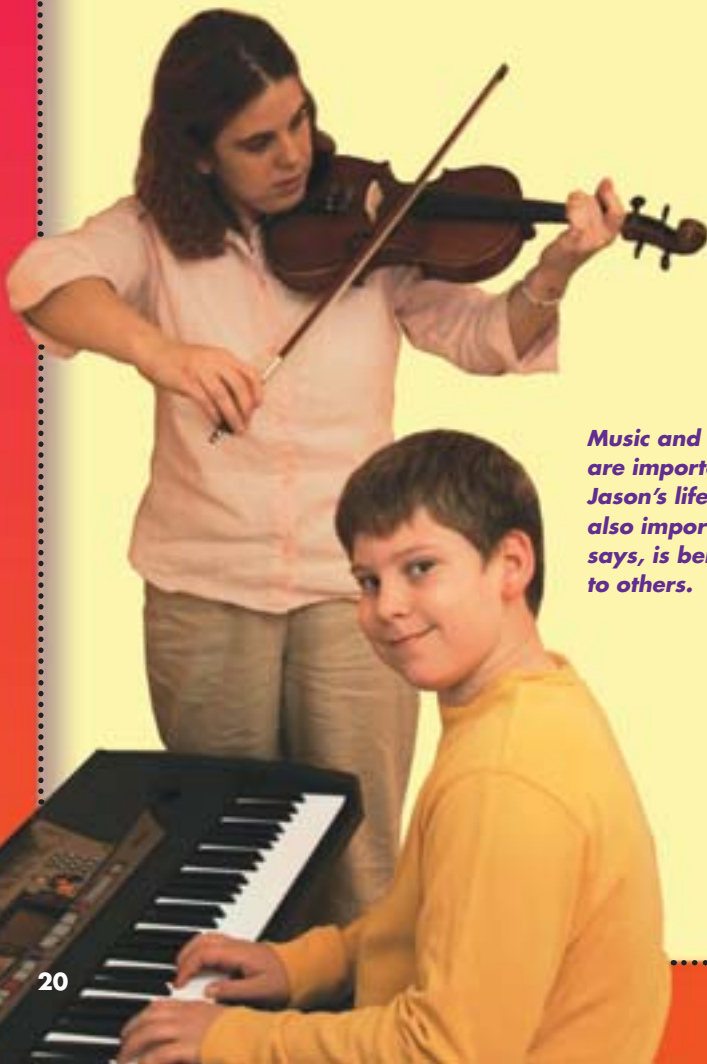
Jason is amazed by the rockets on display at the space museum in Huntsville.

That love shows as they hold family home evening, pray, and read the scriptures together. Jason is particularly fond of stories about Nephi in the Book of Mormon: “He just kept doing what Heavenly Father asked him to do. I wonder if I would have the same courage.” There is no question in Jason’s mind about serving a full-time mission someday. He wants to give others the same opportunity missionaries gave to his mother when she was a teenager in Italy.

With all that is going on at home, you’d think Jason might feel overloaded at times. But he does find time to work on Scouting, create artwork, look through his telescope, and practice music. “My goal is to become the best musician in the world,” he says.

He is also eager to help at Church and looks forward to becoming a deacon. “Getting ready for the Aaronic Priesthood is important to me,” he says. “I expect the leaders and the boys my age to count on me. If I’m asked to do something, I’m going to complete the task.”

And you can be sure he will do it with kindness. ●



Music and art are important in Jason’s life. But also important, he says, is being kind to others.

