

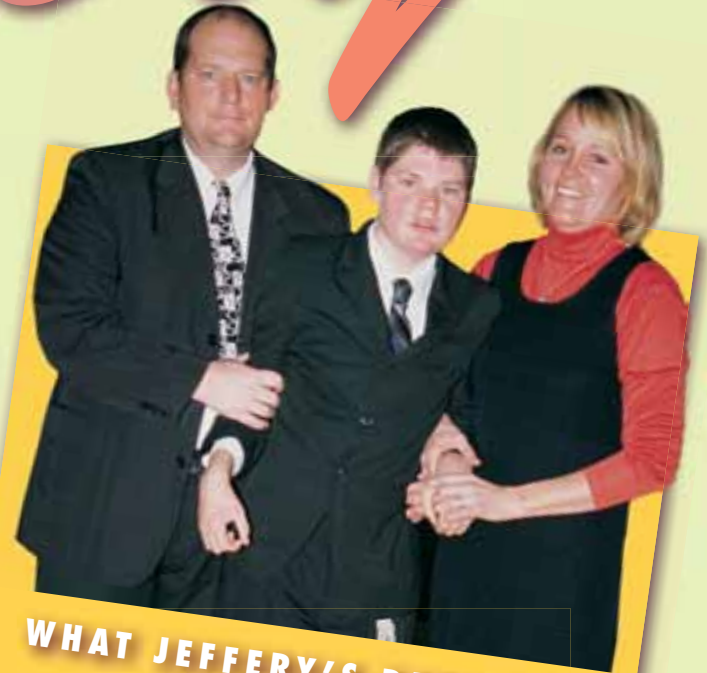
# WE KNOW Jeffery

BY SALLY JOHNSON ODEKIRK  
Church Magazines

*By helping one of their own, members of this deacons quorum found they received more than they gave.*

**S**ome people play such a significant role in a group that everyone wants them involved, even if it means going the extra mile. That's the way the members of Jeffery Libberton's deacons quorum feel about him.

Jeffery struggles with multiple physical and mental disabilities, including having no verbal communication skills. He attended Primary until he was 12 years old, and then his parents started taking him with them to their Sunday classes. Jeff's friends in the Roosevelt Utah 10th Ward deacons quorum who had already turned 12 couldn't imagine quorum meetings and activities without him, and they



## WHAT JEFFERY'S PARENTS HAVE TO SAY

**W**hen Jeffery's parents learned about [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org), they reviewed the Web site and found it very useful. His dad, Jeremy, said, "I found the links to helps for fathers and grandparents helpful, but most of all I loved the constant focus on the eternal perspective and the reminder of love and faith needed to cope successfully with raising a family with a disabled child in it."

His mother, Suzie, says, "This Web site has everything it needs to educate new teachers or helpers who work with those with special needs. A new teacher can go to this Web site and gain useful insight in a short time."

They appreciated having so much helpful information in one place. "We can browse on many subjects and get answers to questions or information to help others understand what we have spent many years learning."

wanted him to come with them.

The first step for the quorum presidency was to meet with his parents. "We talked with the boys about Jeffery, his needs, and his attitudes," says his father, Jeremy. "Their immediate response was, 'We know Jeffery. He has been in our Primary for a long time.'"


The second step was to turn to [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org) for suggestions. The boys went to the autism section of the Web site to learn even more about Jeff's disability. And the third was to work together as well as individually on the Boy Scouts Disability Awareness merit badge.

### Part of a Quorum

The more the boys learned about Jeffery's disabilities, the more they discovered ways to help him. Jayde Bertoch learned that Jeff cannot always control his emotions. Sometimes it is just one of those days. They also learned that even though he is nonverbal, he likes to have his friends around.

Everyone joins in to welcome Jeffery at quorum and Young Men meetings. "We play rock-paper-scissors to see who gets to help him," says Kenyon Mitchell, 13. "The winner gets to be Jeffery's buddy and helper for the day. My testimony has grown and is still growing every Sunday at church and on Tuesdays at Young Men when I help him get around."

Tyler Scott, 12, agrees. "It's fun having him in our



## HOW TO HELP JEFFERY

After reviewing the information at [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org), the boys decided that these were some of the things they could do to include Jeffery more:

- Plan at least one activity a month specifically geared to include Jeffery.
- Talk regularly with his parents and ask them questions and get their feedback.
- Use more pictures in lessons.
- Be more aware of how their own behavior may affect Jeffery.
- Continue to use the buddy system so Jeffery is safe and is never alone.
- Give Jeffery lots of praise.
- Use more lesson-appropriate videos. Jeffery likes videos, and the boys have positive learning experiences.

meetings," he says, "because he puts a smile on all of our faces. He enjoys it when we sing, and he also likes listening to the lessons. He can't talk, but we can talk to him, and he understands everything we say. I like having him as one of my friends."

Their adviser, Marshall Bellon, says, "Jeffery does not need words to express his love, since his smile and eyes say it all. His eyes are the windows to his heart. As I am teaching the lessons in class, it is comforting to have Jeffery reach out and grab my hand as he looks up at me. It is through this simple

spirit is able to touch mine and we share in the truthfulness of the gospel. It seems that it is his way of saying 'I understand and believe the things being taught.'

Jerico Liddel, 12, likes to give high-fives to Jeffery when he responds to him. He says, "It's a lot of fun to be with Jeffery. He likes us to push him around in his wheelchair. I





## OUR DUTY

*“It is a duty which every Saint ought to render to his brethren freely—to always love them, and ever succor them.”*

Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:229.

## INDIVIDUALS

*“Individuals with disabilities are exactly that—individuals who happen to have disabilities. They want to be loved and recognized, to participate, and to experience the same joys.”*

“Six Myths about Members with Disabilities,” at [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org).

like to help out. It makes me feel good.” They note that Jeffery likes to ride go-carts with his brothers and watch his friends play games.

### Learning More about Disabilities

The boys also thought about others they know who have disabilities and learned more about how to help them.

Brayden Sleight says, “My Grandma Sleight has Parkinson’s disease and uses a wheelchair. Because of her, I have learned to be more concerned for Jeffery and how to help move his wheelchair and

make sure he’s comfortable. I learn how he’s feeling from watching his expressions.”

After working on their disabilities merit badge and deciding to involve Jeffery more in their activities, they met with Jeffery’s parents to find out what he was capable of doing. The boys in the quorum decided to invite him to participate in their basketball game. Since Jeffery couldn’t partici-

participate in the actual game the boys were playing, they took turns removing themselves from the game in order to step to the sidelines to toss the ball to him. Brother Bellon notes, “Having Jeffery become a more active part of the quorum helps us realize that he is really no different than any one of us. Building a relationship with him has allowed all of us to be more compassionate toward him and toward each other.”

These deacons have learned for themselves that it is true that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). As Brother Bellon says, “Their friendship and service to Jeffery are preparing them to become better missionaries, husbands, and fathers, and it allows them to have more compassion for all of those who need a hand of fellowship and friendship. It has allowed them to be grateful for a loving, merciful Heavenly Father who loves all of His children.” **NE**

## A NEW DISABILITIES SITE AT LDS.ORG

**D**o you know someone who is hearing impaired and whom you want to learn how to communicate with? Is there a member of your ward with a learning disability whom you want to involve more in activities or lessons? A new site at [lds.org](http://lds.org) can help answer these questions and more about helping those with disabilities. The site, [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org), can be accessed under the “Home and Family” section of [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The site is a central location of resources to help those with special needs. It includes general information about several types of disabilities and links to related Church articles and community resources. There are links to Church materials, including those translated into Braille and American Sign Language; frequently asked questions; and an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

Christine Crockett, 16, and her Young Women adviser, Sheila Dixon, of the Rose Park Seventh Ward, Salt Lake Rose Park North Stake, recently looked at the Web site. They both felt that [www.disabilities.lds.org](http://www.disabilities.lds.org)

gives valuable insights into the needs of those with disabilities. Christine says, “It made me more aware of those around me and gave me helpful suggestions on how to reach out and help others.”

