

The MITCH MOBILE

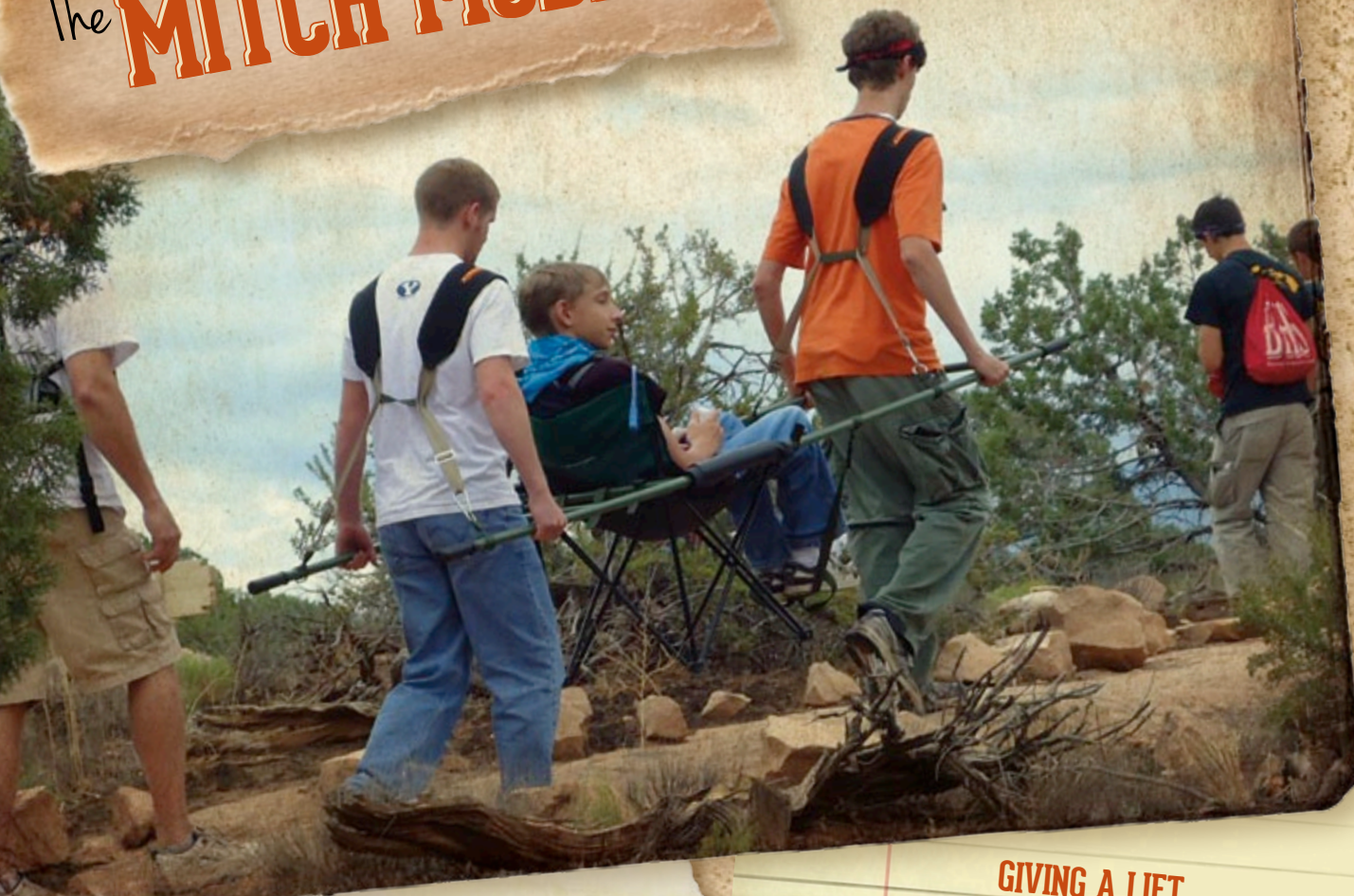


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER. PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MATE LEISHMAN AND JONATHAN K. BACKGROUNDS BY ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK AND HEMERATHINKSTOCK

When Jonathan K., 17, was helping to plan an upcoming high adventure activity with his Scout troop, he couldn't get one young man out of his mind: his friend Mitchell F., a young man with spina bifida.

The group had some incredible—but physically challenging—country in mind they wanted to explore. They were planning on hiking through canyons and other wilderness areas around southern Utah.

Jonathan knew the rugged terrain they planned to visit could make it difficult for his friend to participate. However, he and the rest of his troop wanted to do all they could to allow Mitchell to join the adventure. "We wanted him to experience everything too," Jonathan says.

GIVING A LIFT

As a solution, Jonathan used his Eagle Scout project to build a carrying device—the "Mitch Mobile," as it came to be called—that would allow the young men to literally carry Mitchell throughout the journey.

There was no shortage of volunteers to help with building the Mitch Mobile. Friends and business owners from around town donated supplies to build the carrier and harness. Many people worked long hours to make sure the entire construction was safe, strong, and portable.

Of course, it was only after the carrier was completed that the true service began. After a few short trial runs around town, it was time to take the Mitch Mobile out on its true maiden voyage.



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THE WIDE-OPEN WILDERNESS

Ultimately, the high adventure outing was a huge success from start to finish. Jonathan and friends were able to carry Mitchell over every stretch of landscape and rough terrain they'd planned to see and explore. All of the young men gladly took turns wearing the harness. "I love taking him with us," Jonathan says. They have since been on trips to many other backcountry locations.

"We've taken him everywhere," Jonathan says. They've traversed slot canyons, cliffs, rivers, sand dunes, and steep hills. "He's basically like a brother to me."

As for Mitchell, he's enjoyed the camaraderie with his friends every step of the way. He's also enjoyed the amazing terrain they've visited together. One of his favorite activities was rappelling. "I've loved it," Mitchell says.

MODERN-DAY WARRIORS

The Mitch Mobile had yet another chance to shine when Mitchell's older brother Spencer, along with Jonathan, carried Mitchell during a community parade. They marched with a large group of Latter-day Saint young men dressed as the 2,000 stripling warriors to carry the message of the gospel.

Mitchell wanted to ride in the harness rather than a wheelchair, because he thought it would be more accurate to Book of Mormon times. He loved being in the parade with so many other youth. "It was pretty powerful," Mitchell says.

BLESSING OTHERS

Even after all the young men have done with it so far, the Mitch Mobile is just getting started. The carrier will benefit others for years to come. The Mitch Mobile was donated to a local spina bifida organization, so while it remains stored permanently at Mitchell's home, the carrier is also available for use by others who can benefit from it.

The lives of many people will be blessed because a small group of young men wanted to make sure one of their closest friends never had to feel left out. **NE**

LEARNING FROM GENERAL CONFERENCE

Numerous speakers in the April 2013 general conference spoke about serving others. For example, President Thomas S. Monson said, "I pray that we may be aware of the needs of those around us. . . . May we ever be ready to extend to them a helping hand and a loving heart" ("Until We Meet Again"). And President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said, "Serving God and our fellowmen will challenge us and transform us into something greater than we ever thought possible" ("Four Titles"). Read the rest of their talks at conference.lds.org, where you'll also find inspiring messages on this topic from President Henry B. Eyring ("Come unto Me"), Elder Tad R. Callister ("The Power of the Priesthood in the Boy"), and Brother David L. Beck ("Your Sacred Duty to Minister").

