

Their FIRST YEAR experience...

read from MOM & OWEN about TEAM OWEN 2011

SUMMARY

At the request of the Sharri Runnels, Executive Director of the Spina Bifida Association, our family has put together our thoughts on what TEAM OWEN was for us and how it was successful. Items in “ ” are direct quotes from Owen. “I had fun doing the Walk N Roll A Thon, and playing all of the games there. It gave me an opportunity to speak and talk to people.”

BACKGROUND

For our family, the 2011 Walk-N-Roll was our first Walk-N-Roll event. The Halloween weekend has always been a big family camping outing up in the mountains. This was an exception during 2011. As we were going to be in Phoenix, we jumped at the opportunity to participate in this exciting and fun event. For the last 11 years, our family had been involved with the association in various and changing capacities. We truly value the association and the wonderful services and opportunities it provides our family. We started early with the Walk-n-Roll to teach Owen proper event participation, with planning, execution, and follow through.

OUR PROGRAM

Fun Flyers: The fun started in making a full page color flyer, sporting pictures of Owen from birth to 10 years. Owen enjoyed picking out pictures, copy & pasting the sample letter, and making edits to personalize to content. We made many copies of our flyer to get the word out during October, National Spina Bifida Awareness Month. This was perfect for a fifth grader who loves computers. (The flyer is enclosed.)

Distribution: We started at school. “I had to tell my class to contribute to the Roll a Thon. For 1 week the school made announcements in the morning requesting support of TEAM OWEN. I gave flyers to everyone I know and tried to get everyone to contribute to TEAM OWEN. Everyone at school (600) students received a flyer, my doctors’ offices, family members, church classes, neighbors, and my parents work & employees.” We really focused on telling everyone about TEAM OWEN each day, and focused on a new group of potential supporters each week.

Creating a Fun Team Environment: It was important to our family to make this an opportunity for Owen to reach out to his peers and start a team. He is a shy person, and tends to stay in his comfort zone. This opportunity really gave him something he believed in to talk about with his friends. The whole school was talking about TEAM OWEN and wanted to be a part of the excitement. We had 5 families (parents and children) sign-up and participate in TEAM OWEN. We had training practices with the school kids, and all the neighbors saw us out exercising. “I wanted to have a team to get out and exercise and meet people I have never met.”

Reaching a Goal: Owen, Lilly (Owen's sister), and our team members really enjoyed the website. "I really liked the website, and creating my own web page. I would go on-line almost every day to see how I was doing. I read too on the website that there were prizes for the highest individual fundraiser and the highest team fundraiser. I really wanted to be the top fundraiser, so I could win the PS3." As the team grew in participants, they were excited to raise the most funds so the team could earn the team prize. We figured a plan that each family in the team could keep the prize for 1 month each. That way each team member could enjoy the prize. This was a great motivator for the kids at school. Everyone wanted to be part of TEAM OWEN and share the prize. Owen's school has a Halloween contest each year. Owen chose to be Santa with a sleigh that fit on his wheelchair. The custom made bright red sleigh traveled all through school before the Roll-A-Thon , with TEAM OWEN on each side. Every student received a candy cane from Santa (Owen), and was so excited for TEAM OWEN.

Follow Through: With each contribution, the website sent an email to the supporters. Owen also sent a personalized email to each contributor, thanking them for their participation. We did not have 1 or 2 big contributions to lead the team to the top. Owen received a lot of smaller donations, from individuals that know and care about supporting this organization. Next year we will have to expand into the corporate arena. We did go international in our efforts. We had contributions from Grand Cayman and Hawaii! Following the event, each contributor received a full color personalized thank you card with pictures of the event and the winning team! The cards were a big success and the recipients love them!

FINAL THOUGHTS

This was a fun and great event for our family. We enjoyed putting everything together, walking & playing the day of the event, and sharing our success with the school and our team. Owen's individual dream of winning came true. And it was great that the personal success also created successful results for the association. We recognized that all dreams do come true. "I really enjoy playing with the prize each day. Thinking back to the Walk N Roll a Thon, I was so happy to win!" ~ Owen