Note: This is the post captured in The Wayback Machine.

August 03, 2007

Transportation From a Different View Part II - Hand Controls Spell Freedom for Teen Driver

I caught up with Joe Katona recently, he is the Director of Vehicle Architecture for General Motors Product Development, to get a progress report on his son John who is 19 years old and was involved in a car accident on 4/22/05. He sustained several injuries, and is diagnosed as having a "complete" spinal cord injury at C6 vertebrae.

The GM Fastlane Blog featured his story in July of 2005 just after the accident while John was still undergoing treatment at Craig Hospital in Colorado, in a post called Transportation From a Different View that talked about the GM Mobility Program, resources for transportation needs and his very personal story.

Joe Katona and I share a common thread as we both have sons with spinal cord injuries and their accidents happened the same year, just a few months apart and John's family are bloggers! His family blogs at http://iheartjk.blogspot.com/, about John's journey.

During our conversation Joe Katona shared with me his very exciting and recent news that John did pass his driving test and is driving independently in his GM conversion van, outfitted by Braun. In fact the day we spoke John was driving by himself four hours away to meet family members vacationing at their cottage. (Dad was a bit nervous but very HAPPY about his sons new found freedom).

Fully independent now with no need of a "two-legged" driver, John continues to follow his dreams and goals by studying for his degree in engineering as planned before his accident at Oakland University.

I practically stood up and gave John and Joe a standing ovation at this wonderful news, my eyes misting and heart swelling with joy. John has come so far in the past two years in gaining his independence, (do I hear a round of applause?).

Humor and practical joking kept John and his family focused on the positive during his climb back to independence and a giving heart. John started his own Wheelchair Foundation to help those who cannot afford the much needed equiptment to regain mobility. He keeps trying to give away his power chair as he prefers to wheel himself, John has some use of his arms and uses the palms of his hands covered in leather gloves to palm his wheelchair rather than use the power chair. John does not take the easier softer way to independence I admire his tenacity. However, the $15,000 power

chair maybe needed as strength can be tenuous when dealing with a spinal cord injury will remain parked in reserve for more trying health days.

Taking advantage of the GM Mobility program helped offset $1500.00 of the costs of the entire custom conversion to enable John to drive independently.

Here are some stats on John's ride (vehicle pictured is an example only):

Base Price GM Van: $29,000
1st Modifications $14,000 (To accommodate his power chair and a 'Two-Legged" driver)
2nd Modifications $18, 000 (Added hand controls and effortless power steering and seating changes for independent driving)
Total: $61,000

John is fortunate to have tremendous support and resources available to him from family and friends. Many spinal cord injured struggle with the costs associated with regaining independence. John has his Wheelchair Foundation to help and I support several organizations who have resources to help; UnitedSpinal.org, Wyngs.org and the MS Society.org who provide various resources and support for in and out of vehicle transportation needs. Be sure to check out all the mobility programs offered by auto manufactures to here as well.

Join me in Second Life August 4th, 2007 to learn more about the disabled community and how you can help here: SLURL secondlife://garage/65/209/35

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President
AskPatty.com
Patty Streeter in Second Life

Posted by AskPatty - Automotive Advice for Women at 01:24:00 AM in Commentary

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