

Mission Moments

Made Possible By YOU!

Edition 58, March 2021

Creature Comforts

Remember Liam? He was featured in a [Mission Moment in December 2019](#), which chronicled his amazing journey and personal growth. He was then nominated for and received the [Justin Dart Personal Achievement Award](#) through the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF) in early 2020.

Now, Liam is back with another incredible chapter of his story. When we last reported on Liam, he was finishing up his senior year of high school and was bound for University of Indianapolis, where he had secured a scholarship and a spot on their swim team. Last fall, Liam started at University of Indianapolis and secured his first internship with the White River Township Fire Department Station 53 in Greenwood.

Liam completed the same interview, drug screening, and physical that is expected of new firefighter candidates. Throughout his three-month rotation, his duties consisted of data entry, maintaining fire equipment and assisting Chief Jeremy Pell with caring for Rosie, the new search and rescue canine for the department.

Rosie was a rescue dog whose story had been featured on Fox59. When Chief Pell saw the segment, he knew he had found the search and rescue dog he had been hoping for. Rosie passed the search and rescue test and is now shared by the White River Township Fire Department and Johnson County Sheriff's Department.

During his internship, Liam developed a special connection with Rosie. Chief Pell noticed that Rosie responded to Liam's commands with focus and determination. When Liam's internship came to an end, he missed seeing Rosie and working with her. He decided that he would like to continue working with Rosie, so he reached out to Chief Pell to see if he could volunteer his time on an ongoing basis, which he will begin doing this spring.

Though Liam is still trying to decide on his career path, there's no doubt that public service is in his blood.



Liam with service dog, Rosie

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Liam at the 2019 Special Olympics of Indiana Summer Games in Terre Haute

His grandfather was a volunteer firefighter with the Decatur Township Fire Department for 20 years, and a full-time police officer who worked for the railroad. His uncle is a firefighter in Carmel. Liam was close to his grandfather, who is now deceased, and honors his legacy through his work with Rosie.

Liam's dad, Jon, explained that while Liam is interested in criminal justice because of his family history, he is also interested in potentially pursuing a degree in kinesiology thanks to his involvement with Special Olympics and his passion for sports. Liam has made waves as a national advocate for unified sports through his role as a Special Olympics Ambassador. In February 2021, he visited Capitol Hill to speak with legislators about continued support for unified sports and, Coach Hite, the coach of the University of Indianapolis Swim Team, is working with him on his goal of qualifying for the Special Olympics United States Summer Games. Someday, he also

hopes to launch a national podcast about inclusion in sports.

Liam certainly has his plate full, something that Jon explained was intentional. "We've always talked to Liam about opportunity, and how, when someone presents you with an opportunity, it's up to you to decide to make the most of it or not. And Liam really makes the most of his opportunities."

We can't think of a better way to celebrate Indiana Disability Awareness than by highlighting the extraordinary achievements of Liam, an exceptional self-advocate who is paving the way for others with disabilities, right here in Central Indiana.

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