



# Pathways

## Peter's Journey to Independence

Every person experiences transitions throughout their life. For Peter Jones, he is gaining the skills and confidence needed for his biggest transition to date – living outside of his parents' home.



Peter is 28 years old and has Down syndrome. He has never let his disability get in the way of accomplishing his goals. His parents, Norma and Peter Jones have helped him throughout his journey.

Norma sees her role in Peter's life now as a support person for her son's ambitions and dreams. She says making that transition from raising her child to being his support person was not easy.

"I often find myself falling back into that stage of raising him. He's a grown man, and I respect that," said Norma. "I've learned that boundaries are important. Every day he surprises us with something new. He is

continuously learning, and we never want to put limits on what Peter can do."

The progress Peter impresses Norma with the most is his online classes that are through a program she found based in Las Vegas, NV. Their activities include cooking classes, book club, yoga, science experiments, and dance parties.

"It is rewarding to see Peter take initiative with his online classes. He is motivated and does so many wonderful things," said Norma. "It is rewarding to see him as an adult and being independent. He spends his own money and has his own debit card."

Peter also works at the Palmer Home Thrift Store in Columbus, MS. His hobbies are watching sports, bowling, playing with his three nephews, and spending time with his family and friends.

"I have a lot of hopes for Peter. I want to see him become independent – to manage his money. I would love to see him have a family of his own one day," said Norma. Norma said her family is currently working to transition Peter into living independently

outside of their home.

"We have a little house outside of our house and we are trying to transition him to move there so that one day he can go into supported employment. That has been the biggest adjustment we have had to make so far. He's only ten feet from us but it's so hard to watch him go."

Peter said he has enjoyed staying outside of his parents' home. "I like playing my games. It's been fun," said Peter.

Peter has the best support in the world, according to Norma. "We like to stick together and do what's best for him and make his life as rich as we can. Someone is always on call to help him out and support him. He couldn't have the life he has without the support of our tribe," said Norma.

Norma said her biggest concern is what life will look like for Peter when she is no longer with him. "I've seen other people who are tossed around when their mother, family, or primary care person dies. And that is my biggest concern. We want to have him in a place where he is independent before we leave Earth," said Norma.

Norma views an advocate as someone who speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. "I push Peter to speak for and stand up for himself," said Norma. "I make sure he knows he has a team of support."

Instead of going shopping for him, Norma said she lets Peter shop by himself to build confidence. "We let him clean up after himself. And if it is not perfect – that is okay," said Norma. Peter said he has enjoyed learning to cook, clean, and fold laundry from his mother.

Peter's experience in the school system was mostly good, according to Norma. "When we moved here from Chicago, I was expecting more inclusion. It was a journey, and each year it got better. Some of his teachers I am very proud of because they moved outside of their comfort zone to do things they have not done before, and Peter was rewarded," said Norma.

"When Peter was in sixth grade, there was one teacher, Mrs. Broome, that pushed him to read. Because of that, he can function better in life. He can read the newspaper and keep up with his favorite sports. It took some pushing to get us to that level," said Norma.

Peter's transition planning for life after high school – which starts at fourteen years old – was weak, according to Norma. "I did not know what questions to ask. We are still in the process of trying to make transitions because of that," said Norma.

Norma advises parents who are in the process of transitioning their children to adulthood to start early, do research, and talk to parents who have been through the process.

## Upcoming Transition Webinars in April

### The Family Role in Transition Planning

Wednesday, April 20  
11:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Let's talk about the importance of self-advocacy, what families/parents can do to help youth with planning for the future. The message of the session is simple: Access to information and resources will strengthen families/parents ability to participate in the process and improve transition into the community for youth and young adults.

### Independent Living, Here We Come!

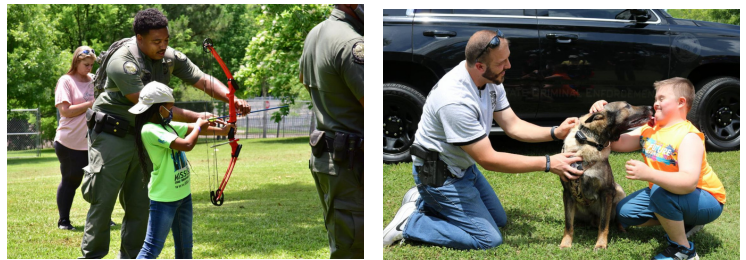
Friday, April 22  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Preparing for independent living is an exciting time in any youth's journey towards adulthood. For youth with disabilities and their families this is a time filled with questions and challenges. Join us as we explore a skills checklist to help parents and youth know where they are and what they need to work on in their journey to independent living. We will talk about the importance of self-advocacy, what families/parents can do to help youth and young adults with planning for the future.

## Family and Friends Picnic May 14, 2022

This year's Born to be WILD Family and Friends Picnic is sure to be another exciting and fun day! The picnic will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Museum of Natural Science in Jackson, MS. Admission to the event is \$7 per person and includes lunch, access to the museum, resource trail, access to the new Lefleur's Bluff Playground that is within walking distance. Fun events will be held throughout the day, including a scavenger hunt, archery, creature feature, K-9 demonstration, and fitness activity. We hope to see you there!

Registration link: [tinyurl.com/wildpicnic2022](https://tinyurl.com/wildpicnic2022)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Mississippi DisAbility Megaconference

June 16-17, 2022  
at the Hilton, Jackson, MS

### Special Education Law Conference and CLE

July 2022