



Nicholas will be 14 years old in April; he was just out playing football with his dad and brother. Now he's off to video games and later piano practice. Sounds like a pretty typical kid, don't you think? Nicholas is not a typical kid at all. He has a depth of character that you see only on occasion in a 13 year old boy. He has a soft spirit, it's like you can feel his soul surrounding him. He is honest, innocent, good natured and kind. He also has High-Functioning Autism. He is the type of person as an adult that I would like as a friend. Sometimes for kids and adults it's tricky to work their way to all of those amazing parts because they have to accept things, like the fact that he talks to himself and repeats movie lines and has conversations that are geared only toward things he is interested in. He won't always look at you and he really likes things his way, although who doesn't? He is working to learn what comes naturally to the rest of us. Things like seeing someone else's view point, acting appropriately in social situations, not always thinking about himself first and compassion. We will never be able to learn to be like Nicholas, what he holds in his heart is a gift, now that he is no longer terrified by everything; he is beginning to share his warmth and love more. If you want a relationship with Nicholas you have to earn it, but once it is earned you get something that is beyond amazing.

The love and respect we feel for him, comes from how hard he works to navigate life in a world that has fairly specific expectations. As he grows older and the world becomes more aware hopefully there will be more acceptance and energy spent on seeing what is inside of this amazing person and other people with similar diagnosis. It would be wonderful if we could create a world with more understanding and less judgment. We are working as a family to try to help people understand this diagnosis and to help families give their children the tools to manage at the highest level they can. We know the Autistic Spectrum is significant and we aren't focused on trying to make our kids "typical". We are just trying to bring awareness and hope. Although there are constant challenges and concerns we would not change our life and we most certainly would not change Nicholas.