

Jay and Karen

"...Our house has become a shared home. It can't be any better than this. It's been quite a journey."



Jay Williams has Duchene Muscular Dystrophy, Karen Young explains, "Recently Jay has needed to start using a trac and ventilator. At first, we worried that he would not be able to come back to his home after the hospital, but Jay never doubted. He said, 'I need to come home.' I told him, 'I am not sure that my husband and I are smart enough to do what you need, with all this new equipment.' But Jay was sure and he was right."



Jay Williams was ready to find a home of his own while he was still in high school. Karen had worked at Brandon years ago and loved the idea of extending her family to include the right person. Thanks to Jay's determination, and the efforts of a network of friends and professional allies, Jay was hooked up with Karen and her family.

They've never looked back.

"Jay initiated it all. He was so determined. Ten years later, we are still together and Jay was right: it worked beautifully." (Jay's CAP case manager, Carolyn Day agrees. "It was like someone else was holding all the pieces. It all came together.")

He can't go out as much as he had but he is still on the go constantly. As he put it, 'You better suck it up, because I am going.' You wake up in the morning and know people count on our being there for friends and community groups: organizing dances and classes. He has taught classes in the community campus program that have been so full they were "standing room only." The reviewer said, 'We have never seen so many people and such engagement.' And when people are having a hard time he tells them, 'Come on over.' "

As we were ending the interview, we asked Jay, what message would you like to give other young people with disabilities? His reply?

"Fight for yourself."