



Bright Light Foundation

Samuel “Sammy” Antonio Salazar

2009 BLF Recipient



Sammy was born in Canton, OH, December 22, 1988. He is the youngest of three children. He was born three months premature and weighed 2 lbs. He was given a 50 percent chance to live. He was placed in an incubator and stayed in Akron Children's Hospital for four months—and lived. In the hospital he developed a disease called Retinopathy of Prematurity in his eyes. He had a procedure called Cryo Surgery (freezing the vessels around the retinas) to try to save his eye sight. When Sammy was one, we moved to Houston, where we were told by Dr. Helen Mintz-Hittner, who had studied this disease at length, that if we did not let him have another Cryo Surgery he would go blind. So we prayed to God that would not be so. He had the Cryo Surgery. Because of this disease he has one good eye (his right eye), but his retina detached in his left eye. He can only see 12 to 18 inches in front of him, has no peripheral vision, is visually impaired, and is legally blind. At age three he was diagnosed with Mental Retardation. Sammy was also diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy (CP)

at age four. He also underwent ankle surgery to lengthen his tendons in hopes that he would be able to walk. Because of the surgery he is able to walk. He presently cannot stand up straight, walks to one side, and wears foot braces. His fine motor skills are also affected because of his CP. Most recently, at age 17, he suffered from Spontaneous Pneumothorax, which results in leakage of air into the chest cavity and can lead to respiratory distress, which is related to his Chronic Neonatal Lung Disease. He cannot be in areas of smoking and cannot fly (because of the pressure in the plane). His chances of having more Spontaneous Pneumothorax is 70 percent.

In spite of all he has gone through, he is a very happy young man. He loves music and has many boom boxes. He loves to talk on the phone to one of his teachers, Ms. Walker, along with disk jockeys in Washington, D.C., and Corpus Christi. Sammy likes computers. He participated in Special Olympics for 10 years. He participated in Track and Field and Swimming and has many gold and silver medals. He also participated in therapeutic horseback riding (SIRE), until May 2009. This May he graduated from Eisenhower High School. This coming school year he will go to Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI), where he will learn more life skills. Sammy is ready to go and learn all he can. He is an amazing young man. His prognosis is that he will be dependent on help with every-day living for the rest of his life. Our hope is that with the proper assistance he will be able to pour himself a glass of water,



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make a sandwich, bathe himself, and clean himself after using the bathroom—things we all do without thinking.

Thank you so very much to the Bright Light Foundation for choosing Sammy as a recipient for financial aid. The funds will help pay for some of Sammy's needs that insurance does not pay.

With Sincere Gratitude,
John, Diana & Sammy Salazar