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Arizona DES Helps Client “Pay It Forward” *October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month*



PHOENIX - Hopefully, at some point in our lives, we have all “paid it forward.” Maybe you found a dollar on the street and gave it to someone; perhaps you brought someone a cup of coffee. There are many reasons why someone pays it forward, but for nineteen-year-old Ryan Stamper, that reason is truly special.

“Ryan remembers being sick and in the hospital when he was young,” said Ryan’s mother, Kim Stamper. “He is doing this quest because he wants another person to have the chance to grow up like he did.”

Several months ago, Ryan saw a story about a three-year-old girl in Texas, Raylea Morgan, who suffers from a rare, genetic disease that has required multiple surgeries. Now, Ryan wants to raise money to help her family, even though they have never met.

Ryan was born with Down syndrome and developed leukemia at age two. He has received services through the Department of Economic Security (DES) since birth, and is still receiving services through the Division of Developmental Services (DDD).

“The Department has been there throughout his life helping him, helping us,” said Kim. “It was so hard in the beginning. There were so many things, but DDD was there with us. They provided speech therapy, worked with him on mastering basic skills, even helped teach him simple things, like how to be safe in the community, such as lessons on crossing the street.”

Over the years, Ryan has recovered from the leukemia and gotten stronger. He has participated in the Special Olympics for the last eleven years and will graduate from Bradshaw Mountain High School in Prescott Valley in May. Right now, he is focused on three goals: graduate high school, get a job, and help others, like Raylea.

Jason David, a family friend, is the lead singer/songwriter of Dare to Be Dreamers, a band based in San Diego, California. The purpose of Dare to Be Dreamers is to help people’s dreams come true. Earlier this year, Dare to Be Dreamers flew him to San Diego, where Ryan was the star in the music video for the song “Still Young.” In the video, Ryan walks around San Diego in his astronaut costume meeting people and collecting their wishes and dreams. He then tapes them to a rocket and launches them to space so

God will find them. “For Ryan it’s all about helping others and making them happy, he wants to get a job that will let him fulfill other’s dreams,” said Kim.

Kim is proud of her son and knows that the Department of Economic Security helped. “Over the years, we have had several different workers, but they have all worked hard to give Ryan the best services they could. There is never enough money in their budget to do everything, but sometimes it’s the little things that matter. One of the best workers simply sat down and talked to Ryan and included Ryan in conversations about him and his services. That made Ryan feel special because he got to make the decisions,” said Kim.

Ryan and Dare to Be Dreamers set up a [Go Fund Me account for Raylea](#). When the video was released on [You Tube](#) it went viral. The last time Ryan checked, it had more than 155,000 views.

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