

# Joshua's Story

## From School Days to New Beginnings



### Inside Scoop

Lilian and Esneider share that Joshua's smile says it all, each small step forward is a big win. From joining dance group with new confidence to learning daily living skills, they've seen how patience, teamwork, and the right support make a real difference.

With Unique Support's planning and guidance, Joshua's transitioning from school life has been smoother, allowing him to gain more independence while remaining surrounded by care and encouragement.

### Meet Joshua: Dancing, Smiling, Thriving

*Joshua was a Year 10 student at Butler College in the Education Support Department. With the guidance of his Education Assistants, he learnt strategies to stay focused and manage his emotions. Joshua feels most at ease with familiar people, and while changes to his routine can be challenging, he continues to grow in confidence with the right support.*

*Since August 2025, Joshua has been gradually transitioning from school life. On Wednesdays, he shines at a dance group where he's made new friends and expresses himself through music and movement. Thursdays are all about independence, riding his trike in the community and helping prepare meals, building both skills and self-assurance.*

*In July 2024, Joshua took a big step forward by moving into a supported home with Unique Support, after many years of living with his dad, Declan, who lovingly cared for him full-time. The transition was made smoother through thoughtful planning, familiar staff, and strong collaboration between his dad, support team, therapists, and school. Together, they created a Behaviour Support Plan tailored to Joshua's needs.*

*Joshua has also faced significant health challenges with courage. Ongoing issues with his catheter once meant infections and regular hospital visits. In late 2024, a nurse began managing his care at home, making a huge difference. By early 2025, his catheter was removed, leading to fewer health concerns and a noticeable boost in his happiness and cheeky personality. Today, he also benefits from extra care through the Down Syndrome Clinic.*

*This year, Joshua's progress has been inspiring. He's learning practical life skills, putting on his shoes, using cutlery, preparing meals, and telling others when he needs the toilet.*

*He's walking more often, trying new foods, building confidence with public transport, and expanding his vocabulary with words like "more," "good," and "hello."*

*Joshua continues to bring joy to everyone around him. Whether it's music, dancing, water play, or caring for others, he shares his vibrant personality in every interaction. While he mainly uses signs and pictures to communicate, every new word is a milestone worth celebrating.*

*Joshua's story is a wonderful reminder of what's possible with the right mix of support, patience, and love. 💜*



## From the Heart: Esneider & Lilian Share Their Journey

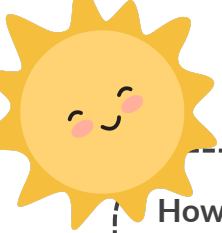
*Our support workers are at the heart of everything we do. Each brings their own compassion, strength, and perspective to the people they support. In this edition, we hear from Lilian and Esneider as they share their experiences walking alongside Joshua on his journey; celebrating his progress at school, at home, and beyond.*



### Esneider's Perspective

For Esneider, Joshua's journey has been a powerful reminder of the importance of patience and perseverance. He recalls the challenges Joshua faced with changes to his routine, especially at school, and how, with gentle encouragement and consistent support, those challenges have turned into opportunities for growth. Watching Joshua gain independence, both in his school life and at home, has been deeply rewarding. For Esneider, knowing he's part of a team that makes a lasting difference is what makes the work so meaningful.





### How have you seen Joshua grow or change since he began transitioning out of school?

It's been a bit up and down at times, but overall I can see he's ready to move forward. He seems much more settled at home. In the mornings, when he wakes up and I take him to school, he often has a big smile on his face. That smile tells me he might be playful or even a little cheeky during the day, but that's just who he is. At home, though, his face tells a different story, he's calm, relaxed, and truly himself.



### What kind of goals is Joshua currently working towards, and how are you supporting him to reach them?

Joshua is working on becoming more independent and doing things with less support from us and his support workers.



He's improving in following his daily routines with fewer prompts. Another important goal is being more physically active, which helps with his health and weight. We encourage him to walk further and more often. He's also engaging more in everyday tasks like cooking and laundry, which used to be quite difficult for him. Now that he's not at school, he has more energy and is calmer at home, which makes it easier for him to participate in these activities.

### What has been the most rewarding moment during this period?

For me, one of the most rewarding things has been seeing how Joshua now accepts new support workers with ease, something that once took a long time. It shows how much he has matured. Over the three years I've known him, he's become more confident, better at expressing his needs, and more comfortable making his own decisions. Physically, the progress has been remarkable too. He once relied heavily on a wheelchair, but now he can walk long distances. He follows instructions more easily, and he's much calmer in situations that used to upset him. Where he once might have thrown things out of frustration, he now understands that people are here to help him. That growth has been amazing to witness.

### Key moments in building trust

It wasn't always easy, Joshua finds it hard to trust new people. When I first started working with him, it took about three months before we built that trust. Once he realised I was there to support him, he opened up and began making progress. Trust was the turning point. To work with Joshua, you need to see him as a person first, not just someone with a disability. If he feels judged, he'll joke around or won't take things seriously. But when you respect his choices and walk alongside him, he thrives. And when he feels respected, he's calm, happy, and willing to give his best.

## Lilian's Perspective



Lilian speaks about the joy of seeing Joshua's confidence grow. From the early days of his school transition and settling into supported living, to watching him shine at his weekly dance group, every step has been meaningful. For Lilian, it's the little milestones; a smile, a new word, or trying a new food that matter most. Supporting Joshua is not just about providing care, but about celebrating his personality, resilience, and the progress he makes each day.

### What are you most excited about for Joshua as he enters this new stage of his life?

I'm really excited to see Josh begin this next chapter. While he'll still need some support, the thought of him stepping into something like a job is very inspiring. We're looking forward to seeing how he manages responsibilities such as delivering newspapers and taking on tasks with independence. It's a big step moving from school into the world of work, and after being alongside him for so long, it's amazing to watch him grow and embrace new challenges.

## Real Lives, Real Stories

*As we wrap up this edition, we're excited for the many milestones ahead. With each step forward, our participants remind us what resilience, growth, and love can achieve. Here's to more stories of independence, confidence, and joy.*

**Have there been any challenges during this transition, and how did the team work together to overcome them?**

At home, Josh is usually calm and settled, showing far fewer behaviours than he sometimes does at school. There are still the occasional tricky moments, but overall he manages really well in his familiar environment. What makes the biggest difference is how the whole team works together. Each person supports Josh in their own way, using their strengths to help him thrive. We communicate regularly to stay on the same page, so if something comes up at school, we can manage it in a way that doesn't affect him at home. Having consistent, familiar faces around him gives Josh a sense of stability and keeps things less confusing.



### Key moments

One of the standout moments for me was taking Josh swimming for the first time. It was a big challenge; he couldn't swim and usually refused to go into the water. But when I gently encouraged him, he agreed to try. To my surprise, he went in without hesitation, and everything went smoothly. We captured photos and videos from that day, and looking back on them still feels exciting. It was such an unexpected but wonderful step for him, and a memory I'll always treasure.

