

"I have been volunteering at O.A.T.S. for about a year and a half now," writes Bill Brown. "It is truly an answer to prayers I have made all my life. I was afflicted\* (I never know what term to use, what is PC or not) at birth. My family has always made the effort to encourage any interest I had knowing I may have a limited time to gain experience. I am blessed to see how much bits and pieces of things I have been exposed to has come into play at O.A.T.S.

"One of the things I became interested in was stock car racing. As a child I raced my "Chevrolet" (okay, a Schwinn Bantam) around my circular driveway. The way most kids dream of battling against Mickey Lolich or catching a pass from a Manning, I raced against my heroes Richard Petty or Bobby Allison, just to name two. My "post race" interviews were a desire to motivate other disabled children to try their best to overcome their situation. While I never made it to Daytona as a competitor, I did get an opportunity to race at Mt. Clemens and Flat Rock. And now many of my friends tell people about what I have done. We tell the story not for any personal benefit but because I want these children and their parents to reach. Try to do things people say they can't, to just try!

"I have been blessed so often with teachers and friends that had this attitude: until I said I couldn't do it, they allowed me the freedom to try. That is what I want for these children at O.A.T.S. I believe that just as I had racing, each one of these children has something that could unlock a world to them. Whether it is music, singing, or dance or computers, each one has something that would encourage them to achieve. When I think back to the kids I rode with on the bus, they were pushed from the bus to the TV set until dinner. Whereas I came home and went to my sandbox or the front room floor, which became Matchbox city. My legs got stronger. Their life was limited to the images on TV.

"I have had opportunities to experience things. Unfortunately, I don't have a degree to express my attitude where it could change education or medical protocol. I believe many children are sold short on what they could do. I see children in our program that I firmly believe could be competitive in a 4H horse show. Godspeed, Bill"

Bill, we are just as blessed that you are a part of O.A.T.S.

\*with Cerebral palsy