

Joel Ward, participant 2005-2016 ...a parent's view by Dawn Rowe...

...he was off into a world that would change his life forever!



**Joel's parents
Dawn and Adrian**

When my Joely was invited to take part in his first PHAB Camp holiday my heart dropped. How could I let my baby boy go away for a whole week when he had never been away from me? I was adamant he wasn't going. Joel is unable to walk and has Ichthyosis, a skin drying condition which needs constant care and medicated lotion for him to be able to function. I had no idea who would be taking care of him, no idea what he would be doing, what he would eat, where he would sleep, who would cream him, take him to the bathroom, dress him, or put him to bed. The list was endless. Then without me knowing my husband Adrian filled in the application form sent it off and Joel was offered his place. I was beside myself!

We had a visit from the volunteers to let us know what activities he would be taking part in and they showed us an itinerary of the week they had planned. Although it sounded fantastic, I wasn't convinced it was the right thing my baby should be doing away from his Mommy! **How wrong was I???**

As we waved goodbye for the first time, me in hysterics of tears and Joel with a big smile on his face (which I wasn't impressed with, as he should have been crying for his Mommy!) **he was off into a world that would change his life forever!**

After a painstaking week without my special boy, I eagerly awaited his return but as the coach pulled into the car park, my Joel was sobbing like a baby! I was horrified, thinking they must not have looked after him well, or that he had missed me too much. But no!! It was because he didn't want to come home!



Joel just starting out with PHAB

He had had such a fantastic week and met some amazing people who now – after more than 10 years' of PHAB – we class as family. And Joel just lives everyday counting down the days to the next PHAB holiday.

It has been so difficult explaining to Joel since he turned 25 that he is too old for PHAB now. He still finds this hard to accept and looks forward to PHAB events so he can catch up with all his friends and the volunteers we have all grown to love!



Joel with his mates Haroon (left) and Pav (right) Venture 2006



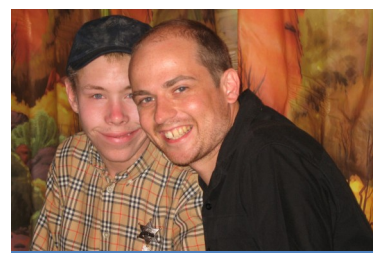
Joel as Superman Last-night Party Venture 2007



Joel with his 'PHAB lads' Lord Mayor Len Gregory's Christmas Party 2010

I really can't express my gratitude to PHAB enough for being such a big part in Joel's and our family's life. You have made such a big difference to how we see Joel's capabilities. We were not giving him half the credit for what he can achieve when not wrapped in cotton wool by myself – ha!

He has the best memories from all the camps he has been lucky enough to attend, even the last minute ones – LOL!



Joel and Andrew Miles 2006



And he is constantly watching his PHAB DVD's so kindly put together by yourselves – as if you hadn't got enough to do!

I have so much admiration for all of the volunteers who take the time out to give disabled children like my Joel a taste of life that they may never experience in the outside world. I never would have imagined my Joel making such great mates with non-disabled children. Neither would I have pictured him abseiling, canoeing, zip wiring – you name it!! (Oh my God – it turns my stomach thinking about it!) Absolutely fantastic work from each and every one of you.

Crashed out on the floor Venture 2008

The love and care all of you have for our children is faultless and I for one as a parent can't thank you enough for making such a big impact on our lives!

The Ward/Rowe family thank you from the very bottom of our hearts for helping to make our son Joel into the amazing young man he is today. Long live PHAB Camps!!

...it has hurt my heart more than I thought writing this. I can't thank you all enough for what you have all done for Joel over the years. I'm signing off now cuz I'm blarting like a fool!!!

Luv u loads
Dawn & Crew x



Below

**Joel with so many friends!
Venture 2008**

Right

**Joel has arrived!
Adult Breakaway 2014**

