

SHARING *Hope* THROUGH HARDSHIP

Joni and Sarah are celebrating Down Syndrome Awareness Month and all the many ways Jesus is sharing hope with the hopeless through our Christ-centered programs! Look inside to see how your prayers and support are changing lives all over the world!



from the heart

“What I thought was the ruin of my life—breaking my neck—was the beginning of God’s greatest use of my life. He chose the thing I despised for his glory and that, to me, is amazing grace.”

What exactly was God thinking when he wrote a diving accident into the script for my life? To be sure, he knew it would transform me and give me a greater love for Jesus. But God saw *far* beyond that. He was seeing millions of others with disabilities.

He was thinking of the Ugandan child with cerebral palsy locked in a chicken coop while her grandparents work. And the stroke survivor languishing on a bed all day behind a storefront in El Salvador. God saw the disabled child “living” on a dirty blanket in a kitchen. And the boy with amputated limbs begging so he could help feed his family.

God saw the American Veteran with PTSD and his unraveling marriage. He saw the lonely young paraplegic who feels out of place in a nursing home. And his great heart was stirred when he saw the many parents who bolt their doors and windows to prevent their children with autism from escaping at night.

It is why God designed Joni and Friends. My broken neck was the

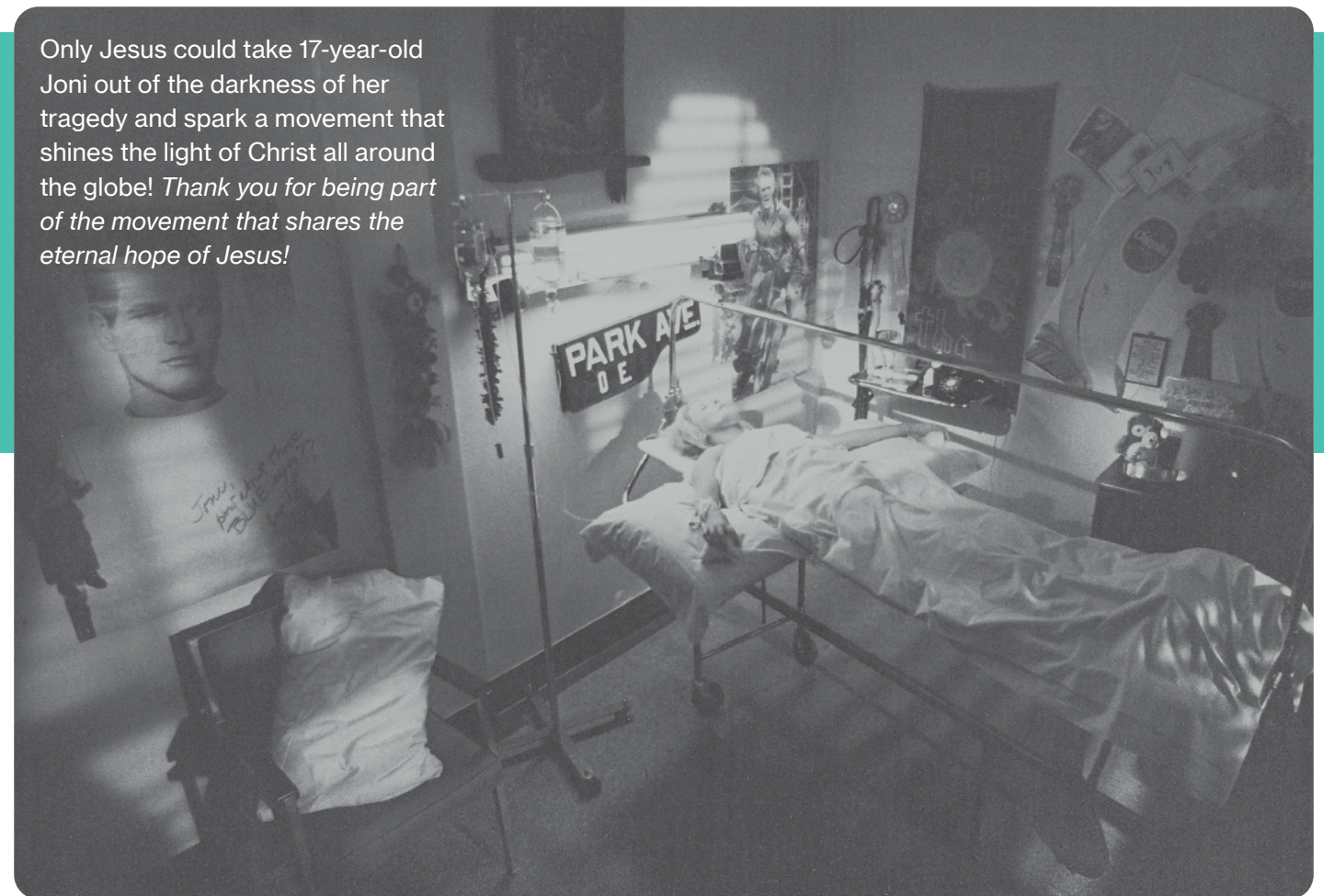
beginning of God’s greatest use of my life; it launched his astounding plan to reach thousands of disabled people with his love. The need was enormous, and so God said to us, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys... and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame” (Luke 14:21).

In this newsletter, you’ll read all about God’s great heart for the disabled and the many ways he is reaching them through Joni and Friends. (I can’t think of a better use of my broken neck.) Am I humbled by the expanding ministry of *Joni’s House*? You bet! (Can’t think of a better use of my name!)

And I can’t think of a better friend than you as you join me in praying for and financially supporting God’s amazing work through Joni and Friends! Besides, God wrote *you* into the script of my life.



Only Jesus could take 17-year-old Joni out of the darkness of her tragedy and spark a movement that shines the light of Christ all around the globe! Thank you for being part of the movement that shares the eternal hope of Jesus!



Doctors Said Their Daughter was Good for Nothing. God Says She is Fearfully and Wonderfully Made!

Wendy and Salvador have four children. Their youngest, Johanne, is 14 years old and has Down syndrome. “Johanne’s life has been very demanding,” says Wendy. “When she was born, everyone saw Johanne as a disabled child who was not worth fighting for. Her aunts, uncles, and cousins isolated themselves from her. And the doctors told us that Johanne was good for nothing. ‘She won’t walk, talk, or understand anything,’ they said. They told us to stop taking care of her.”

“But God is *our* doctor,” continues Wendy. “We knew he would lead us to find support, and that’s what we’ve found here at *Joni’s House El Salvador*.” Today, because of the therapies Johanne receives at *Joni’s House*, Johanne walks, talks, and understands! “*Joni’s House* helps keep Johanne’s life moving forward!”

Johanne receives physical therapy, speech and occupational therapy, and cognitive therapy at *Joni’s House*. “These therapies have helped her a lot!” beams Wendy.

Johanne receives customized tutoring at *Joni’s House*.



“*Joni’s House* makes us feel strong enough to face life out in situations of discrimination and isolation, and the whole family wins! Thank you for your unconditional support!” — Wendy

Johanne, Wendy, and their whole family found complete Christ-centered care at *Joni’s House*!



Johanne isn’t the only family member benefiting from *Joni’s House El Salvador*. “Here at *Joni’s House* it’s a family environment and the support is for the whole family,” says Wendy. “We get emotional and spiritual support, too. I can talk about things that are eating me up inside, and when it feels like I’m all alone, I’m reminded that I’m not alone. God is with me!”

“At *Joni’s House* people understand how the stress of disability can impact a marriage. And Johanne’s siblings are reminded that they are important, too. *Joni and Friends* has changed the way they see their sister. Now they understand Johanne and our family’s situation better. We used to be overwhelmed and lonely, but *Joni’s House* has united our family more. We all feel it!”

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.”

PROVERBS 24:3-4

I am part of
Joni's House!

Joni's House Changed My Life!

“I have painful legs,” explains Abdul. “I am disabled. I feel the bone coming out of my hip. It feels like I am stepping on sharp nails.”

Abdul was born with misaligned limbs and disfigured joints in his legs and hips. Though he once found employment and saved his money, it was stolen from him, leaving Abdul penniless. He had no choice but to live in a makeshift tent.

But our *Joni's House Uganda* team built Abdul a proper house. He now works the land around his house to grow his own crops to feed himself and sell for income. Abdul was initially confused and wondered why anyone would care

enough to build him a house. Now he understands that his house—and *Joni's House*—is a gift from Jesus.

“It's a miracle to own a house on my own land!” says Abdul. “I am full of joy! I've started going to church because God has done wonders for me. Because of my house, I have gained respect in my community. *Joni's House* raised me up and changed my life!”

People with disabilities are often the poorest of the poor. *Thank you for the love, prayers, and support you sent Abdul. Because of you, he not only has a house—he has a relationship with the Master Builder!*

“For every house is built by someone,
but God is the builder of everything.”

HEBREWS 3:4



Your prayers and generosity send God's love to families living with disability all around the world through our Christ-centered programs like *Family Retreat...*



Wheels for the World...



YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES THE WORLD!

Respite events...



and *Joni's House!* Thank you for making an eternal difference in the lives of many!



Sharing God's Love from Coast to Coast

From New Mexico ▼

Jim knows that his adult son, Ian, may never be able to live on his own, but he's teaching Ian various life skills so he can be as independent as possible. Ultimately, Jim wants Ian to know that his life is something he can be proud of. "Our children's lives have value. They should be proud of their lives."

Being deaf and having a disability bring social and language barriers into Ian's life, but that hasn't stopped Ian from being an extrovert. He loves interacting with others. And although his *Family Retreat* volunteer didn't know sign language, Jim could see that Ian had found a fast friend in his buddy Chris. "God provided a person who was sensitive, gentle, and compatible with Ian."

Ian loved being able to see and interact with other people living with disabilities at *Family Retreat*. There he found a space of belonging where he was unequivocally accepted by others. And the "icing on the cake" was seeing Ian, Chris, and Jim at the talent show! The three of them had a conversation in American Sign Language, and Ian was able to tell everyone about his favorite activities, foods, and his beloved dog!

Family Retreat gave Jim time to do some of the things that he enjoyed, too—like going down the waterslide or having conversations with the other fathers. Above all, *Family Retreat* bonded Jim and Ian even closer together.



Family Retreat reminds Jim, Ian, Chris, and everyone in attendance, "Your life is something you can be proud of!"

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

PSALM 139:14

From Dallas ▼

"Angel's mother had a difficult pregnancy and did not make it through childbirth," says his grandmother, Rose. The heartbreak of burying her daughter five years ago is clearly still fresh today, but that doesn't stop Rose from giving her grandson his best life possible.

Angel has cerebral palsy. He has never been able to walk. Therefore, Grandma Rose carried Angel everywhere they went. But with Angel growing and Rose aging, it was nearly impossible to leave the house any longer. Their future looked hopeless until our Joni and Friends Dallas team met them on a *Wheels for the World* outreach in Cuba.

That day, little Angel was given a brand-new pediatric wheelchair—specifically developed to be sturdy and strong enough to handle dirt roads and the rough terrain of his community. And his wheelchair is adjustable, too, so it will meet Angel's needs for years to come.

Your prayers and generosity changed Rose and Angel's lives that day, giving them practical help and new hope for the future. They didn't just get a wheelchair through *Wheels for the World*. They also got their own Bible and the greatest gift of all—the Good News of Jesus Christ! *God bless you for sending his love to families struggling with disability all over the world!*



You changed Rose and Angel's lives forever!

From Nashville ▼

Every wheelchair comes to us with a story—many with a story of loss. But when a wheelchair is donated its owner's story is far from over. Indeed, their legacy has just begun, and God uses that wheelchair to write a new story.

James had quadriplegia and many other underlying issues. He was non-verbal but communicated clearly through smiles, nods, and blinks. James and his mother, Elizabeth, became part of our Joni and Friends family, and as we visited and prayed together, Elizabeth found new hope for the future.

We were delighted when Elizabeth and James invited us to celebrate his 15th birthday with him, never realizing that it would be his last. James went to be with Jesus in July, but his love and memory will live on... Elizabeth has donated his wheelchair to Joni and Friends so it can be refurbished and given to another disabled child in need. And while James is dancing on streets of gold in heaven, another child will receive the gifts of mobility and dignity because of his impact on the world.



James lives on in our hearts and his wheelchair is giving another child a new outlook on life.

From Louisiana ▼

Seven-year-old Nick has Sturge-Weber syndrome as well as a seizure disorder and visual impairment. He requires a wheelchair for mobility, a feeding tube to eat, and he's non-verbal. It's very rare for his parents to find anyone willing to offer childcare for Nick because of his multiple and complicated needs. This leaves his parents, Oren and Ginger, without any chance to rest and reconnect.

But that all changed when Nick's family came to *Family Retreat!* Nick, his parents, and his siblings experienced fun, Christian fellowship, and some much-needed biblical encouragement. The whole family was rejuvenated, and Nick brought joy to everyone he met at *Family Retreat* with his great smiles and full participation in all the activities.

Oren is the head pastor of Greenwell Springs Baptist Church in Louisiana. He's been so blessed by Joni and Friends that he's now expanding his church's disability ministry—adding a sensory room and making sure disabled people of all ages have full access to Christ!



Nick and his family find the joy of the Lord at *Family Retreat* (above) and at all our events like the Walk 'n Roll (below)!



From North Carolina ▼

All too often, families living with disability struggle to build friendships at church and don't feel like they can get involved in worship. Many families give up on going to church altogether—sometimes for years—because of the daunting challenges they face both at church and at home. That's why our teams at Joni and Friends are dedicated to teaching churches what a thriving disability ministry can look like. Because people of all abilities need a church where they can fully belong, Joni and Friends comes alongside the church to identify and remove barriers impacting families living with disabilities.

"Joni and Friends calmed my anxious nerves about starting a new disability ministry," says Lauren from Tabernacle Baptist Church in Hickory, North Carolina. "Thank you for providing such wonderful resources to churches like ours! You've provided us with such invaluable insights. We've learned the importance of caring for the whole family. Moreover, we've gained a deeper understanding of the significance of creating an accessible church environment ensuring that everyone can fully participate in worship and church activities!"

Lauren continues, "Time and time again, God has proven his faithfulness by providing for our ministry's needs in miraculous ways. The Lord used Joni and Friends to bless us with an accessible vehicle, enabling us to extend our ministry to friends in wheelchairs! It is truly a testament to God's goodness and provision!"



Parker is 22 years old and has Mowat-Wilson syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and intellectual disabilities. He and his family are able to attend Tabernacle Baptist Church together because of the training provided by Joni and Friends. "I know that Parker is well cared for, loved, and is being fed from the Word now, too!" says his mother, Lori. "And my husband, Lee, and I can attend the services each Sunday while Parker is in his class!"

“Go out quickly... and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame... so that my house will be full.”

LUKE 14:21,23

Your prayers and faithfulness are bringing special needs families into the house of God!



THIS MONTH JONI CELEBRATES HER 74TH BIRTHDAY!

Only Jesus could take a 17-year-old girl's tragedy and turn it into a movement that would reach disabled people all over the world for Christ. Only the hand of God at work in and through Joni's life could reverse that tragedy and turn it into such a great triumph! July marked 56 years since the diving accident that broke Joni's neck. Now, at 74, Joni is more passionate than ever about sharing the Good News of Jesus!

Thank you for the birthday blessings you've sent Joni, and thank you for praying, serving, and giving alongside Joni and Ken. Our Christ-centered programs like *Retreats & Getaways*, *Wheels for the World*, and *Joni's House* depend on folks like you who are willing to reach out with compassion to people with disabilities all around the world. You are a true friend of Joni and Friends!

Honor a Loved One, Transform a Life

We gratefully acknowledge contributions given in memory or in honor of loved ones to further ministry in the disability community. To give a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion, visit joniandfriends.org/donate or contact Joni and Friends at 818.707.5664

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Wheelchair Christmas Ornament

This year Joni celebrates 56 years in her wheelchair! Be part of the celebration with this wheelchair ornament inscribed with the Joni and Friends logo and message, "Sharing Hope Through Hardship."

Joni's isn't the only wheelchair milestone to celebrate. Just ask the more than 200,000 people around the world who have received the gift of mobility, and the Gospel, through Joni and Friends.

This 3" x 3" pewter wheelchair ornament comes in a velvet box, perfect for gifting!

\$22



*100% of proceeds go directly to
advance ministry to children and families living with disability.*

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