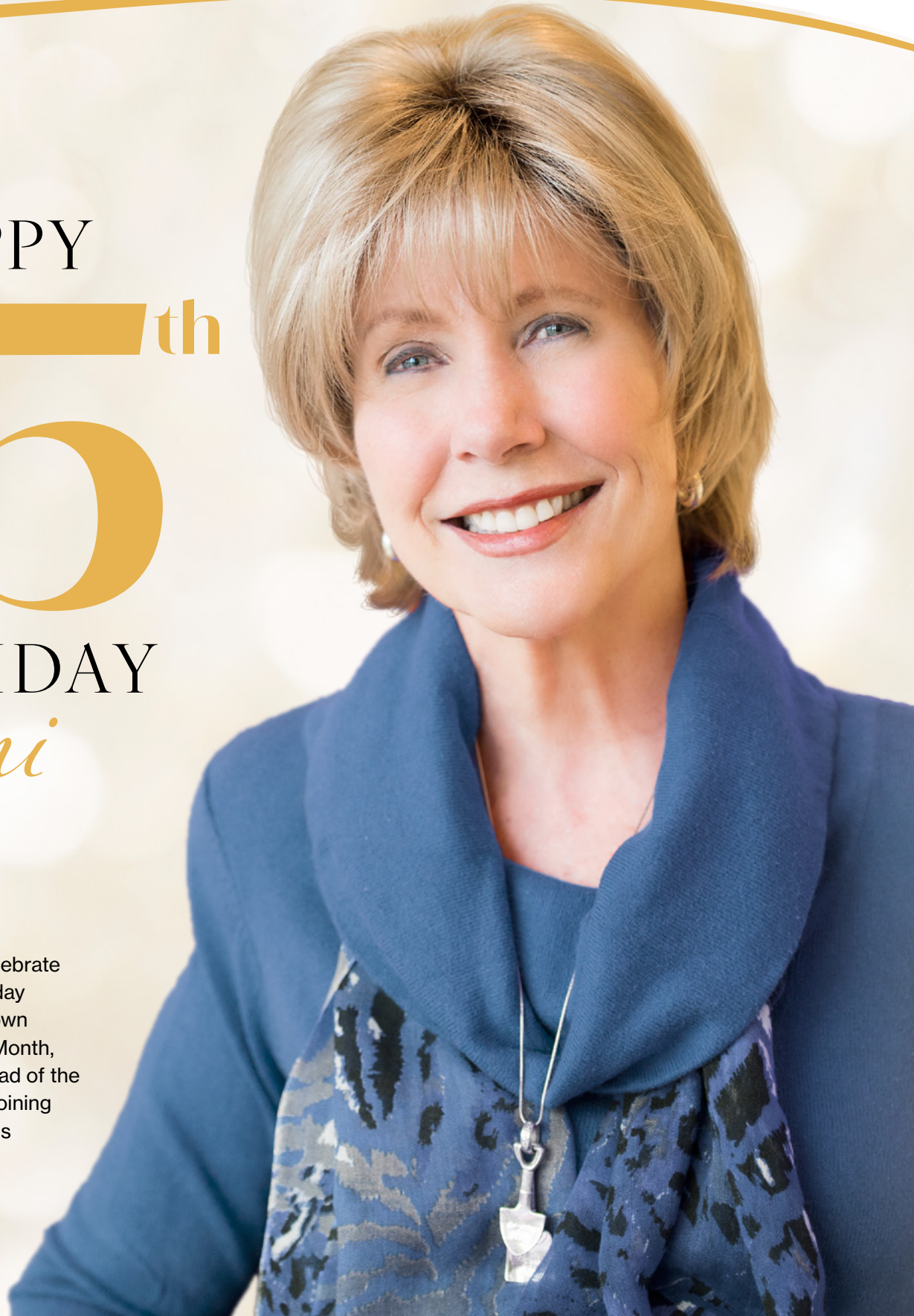


# SHARING *Hope* THROUGH HARDSHIP

HAPPY  
**75**<sup>th</sup>  
BIRTHDAY  
*Joni*

We have so much to celebrate in October! Joni's birthday on the 15th, National Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and the worldwide spread of the Gospel! Thank you for joining us in praising God for his faithfulness!



# from the heart

“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

HEBREWS 4:16

I love singing the old favorite, “Amazing Grace.” The hymn is beloved because of its story. Its composer, John Newton, was a former slave ship captain—an utterly depraved reprobate who was converted by the grace of God. When you read about his stark transformation, you can appreciate how amazing God’s grace is.

But, what is grace? And why is it so amazing? Well, I learned from John Piper that grace is the overflow of God’s loving nature. It is in God’s nature to pour out his undeserved favor to rescue us from sin. And that’s the amazing part. Because we are just like John Newton, miserable sinners who have broken God’s law. We’ve injured others. We are—at the core—oh, so lost.

Thankfully, God saves through his Son, Jesus Christ. It is HIS grace that turns cold hearts of stone into warm hearts full of love for God. That’s how grace works. It saves us, rescues us, and redeems us.

This grace meant the world to me when, decades ago, God rescued me

from the grip of sin. But after my diving accident in which I broke my neck, I needed grace of a different sort—the kind that could help me to not only survive but thrive in a wheelchair. And that’s the other part of God’s nature. Because grace is also a power that God gives to help us live well, especially when we suffer.

God says in Second Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So, there’s saving grace, and once we’re saved, there’s grace that helps us live like we’re saved!

Philippians 2:13 puts it this way: “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” This is the grace I live on every day in this wheelchair. Yes, I’m grateful that I’m saved by grace. AND I’m glad I can live by grace, especially as hard as life is with my paralysis. Oh, what a generous God we have! What a merciful God, for grace is not only his inclination to treat people better than they deserve—it’s his power that helps us live in a way that pleases him.

Friend, it is by grace that you are saved, and it is by grace that you live like you are saved. So, do what it takes to keep your soul open to the grace of God, and look for that grace in Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians. Then you just might find yourself singing “Amazing Grace.”



This is what makes grace so amazing! I mean, the eternal holy God who can no more tolerate sin than light can darkness, this righteous God died an excruciatingly cruel death to rescue dog-nasty sinners. The angels must have stood back thinking, “*The Son of God did WHAT?!*” It was scandalous!

Yes, grace that saves us is amazing. And then... I’m amazed every time God’s grace gives me power to smile living with half a century of paralysis.

It can all be summed up in Hebrews 4:16 where it says, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.... to receive mercy (that’s salvation) and to find grace to help in time of need (that’s power to live well).”

# Jesus Uses *Wheels for the World* to Save Souls!

**M**arjorie brought Robby, her nine-year-old son who has cerebral palsy, to our *Wheels for the World*<sup>™</sup> outreach in the Philippines in hopes that he might receive his very first wheelchair. Up until that point, Marjorie had relied on an outgrown stroller to transport Robby when they needed to leave their home. But as Robby grew, a toddler's stroller was no longer fit for use. Robby arrived at our distribution site in an ambulance.

Our therapists and mechanics got right to work, taking Robby's measurements and assessing his needs. And when our team placed Robby in his brand-new wheelchair, his big, beautiful smile melted everyone's heart.

Robby's sister, Patricia, describes him as "a bundle of joy." But Robby wasn't the only one who experienced God's joy that day, because Patricia had her own encounter with the Lord.

While our *Wheels for the World* crew made sure Robby's wheelchair fit him perfectly, another member of our team blessed Patricia with a Gospel bracelet, which was used to share Christ's gift of salvation. Patricia hung on every word, and when she learned that Jesus would forgive her sins, her joy was uncontainable.

Marjorie, Patricia, and Robby's lives were completely transformed that day. No longer does Marjorie have to worry about how to transport her growing son. No longer does Robby have to sit uncomfortably in a small stroller unfit for his needs. And no longer does Patricia have to worry about the weight of past sins.

"I know where I'm going when I die," says Patricia. "I'm going to heaven!"

Thank you for sharing the love of Jesus with Marjorie, Robby, and Patricia. Because of your faithfulness, their physical and spiritual needs have been met and their lives are forever changed!

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1



CELEBRATING  
**75 YEARS**  
OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



Only Jesus could take the worst day of Joni's life and make it the best part of his plan for her life—and for the lives of people all over the world! Only the hand of God at work in and through Joni's diving accident could reverse that tragedy and turn it into such a great triumph! July marked 57 years since Joni broke her neck at only 17-years-old. And now as she celebrates her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, we are praising God for countless testimonies of hope and salvation—all because a young woman with quadriplegia said, "Here I am, Lord! Use me!"

"Then I heard the voice  
of the Lord saying,  
'Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?'  
And I said,  
'Here am I. Send me!'"

ISAIAH 6:8



Joni's first radio program aired in 1982, the same year she and Ken got married! Now—over 11,000 radio programs later—Joni's inspirational message is more powerful than ever. Go to [joniradio.org](http://joniradio.org) and listen to her four-minute and one-minute broadcasts today!



"There are more important things in life than walking or having the use of your hands," says Joni. "The most important thing is hearing God say, 'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.'" That's why we'll keep sharing the Gospel worldwide, just as we did when we traveled to China years ago. We'll keep making Christ known through *Joni's House* programs and *Wheels for the World* until God's house is full! (Little did Joni know in the early days of *Wheels for the World*, that God would spark an international movement through her faithfulness!)



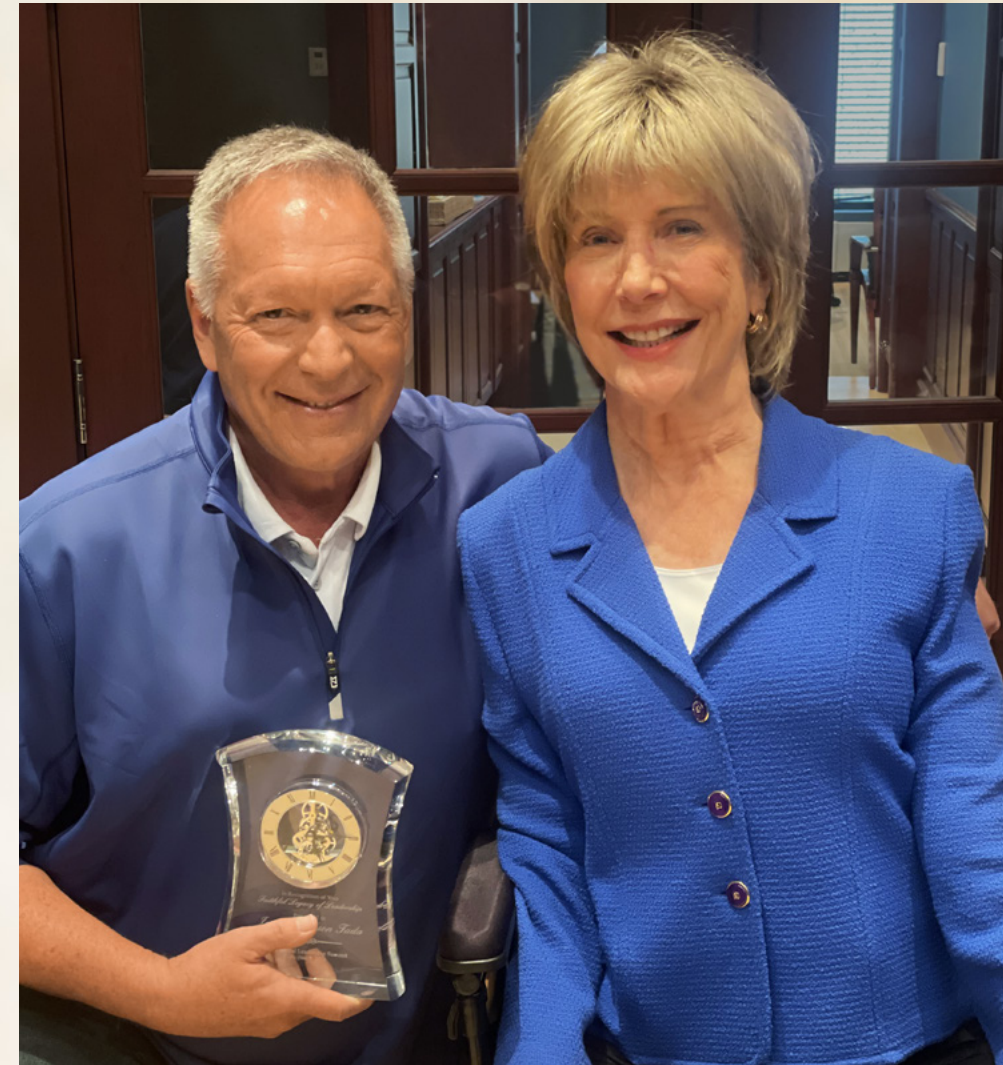
“When a broken neck totally upended my life 57 years ago, leaving me devastated, I never imagined that Jesus would birth an international disability center through my affliction,” says Joni. Today, children and adults with disabilities receive Christ-centered care through all our programs, like our *Retreats & Getaways*. Friends like Sawyer, who has Down syndrome, leave our ministry events feeling closer to God. Joni and Friends is dedicated to honoring people with Down syndrome every day of the year, and especially during October’s National Down Syndrome Awareness Month!



Whether it’s through painting, speaking, writing, or hands-on ministry, Joni brings glory to God and points others to Jesus. “When disability hits we look for answers in the Bible. And I’ve learned that we can never separate the Bible’s answers from the God of the Bible. It was my message when I founded Joni and Friends,” says Joni. “And it’s my message *now*.”

“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise;  
God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:27



In August I spoke at the Global Leadership Summit. I told the audience of over 5,000 Christian business and ministry leaders from around the world that, “God leverages our weaknesses and minimizes our strengths when he does kingdom work. It’s not how the kingdoms of this world get things done, but it is the way of the cross. And in the 45 years I’ve led Joni and Friends, I’ve forgotten everything I ever heard about personal power leading to effective leadership—confidence, charisma, and

chutzpah count for little over the long haul. But giving our weakness to God does!”

After I spoke, David Ashcraft, the President and CEO of the Global Leadership Network, presented me with this inaugural Legacy Leader Award, and I felt so honored and humbled, knowing there was an online audience of over 400,000 registrants. What a joy to remind them that God does his greatest works through the broken and *the least of these!*”

Thank you, Joni, for always reminding us to keep the main thing—  
that is, the Gospel—the main thing!

# Family Retreat Makes a Life-Long *Impact!*

## From North Carolina ▼

Justin was excited, but a little nervous, to meet Mark, his brand-new volunteer at *Family Retreat* back in 2013. Justin has cerebral palsy and vision challenges. He wondered how a new volunteer would react to him. *Would they get along? Would Mark care to get to know Justin as a person?*

Once Justin got to *Family Retreat*, all of his fears faded away. Through the morning worship, men's events, horseback riding, and archery training, an unbreakable bond formed between Justin and Mark. Justin knew that he had found a true friend in Mark.

On the last day of *Family Retreat*, Justin and Mark committed to continuing their friendship. In the weeks that followed, they texted and called, bonding over a shared love for technology—Justin's favorite conversation topic. Justin loves the process of building and repairing computers, and Mark works in security technology. They were a perfect pair!

Soon, phone calls became family visits. Justin visited Mark and his family at his home, and they often attended other Joni and Friends events together. As Mark and Justin spent more time together, Mark realized that he had an amazing opportunity to encourage Justin in his faith. God was leading Mark to disciple Justin as a follower of Jesus.

"It was a natural next step in our friendship," says Mark. "It was fully God's leading to bring our friendship to a deeper focus on faith."

Because Justin's diagnoses cause learning challenges in addition to his vision issues, Mark knew they couldn't follow a traditional Bible study. Undeterred, Mark developed an auditory discipleship plan for Justin.

Every week Mark and Justin watch an online sermon. Mark takes notes and sends them to Justin to review. Then on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. sharp, they meet. During their discipleship sessions, they do more than just discuss the sermon. Mark and Justin come alongside each other as true brothers in Christ, working to apply Scripture to their lives and holding each other accountable in prayer and obedience.

"These discussions help me to better understand the Bible," says Justin. "Mark is patient and kind to let me ask questions about things I might not understand. He gives good feedback about these topics."

Mark and Justin have continued to meet now for over a decade! Mark and Justin know that their close and constant relationship is rare and valuable. Mark compares their friendship to a key biblical example of brotherly love.

"Justin and I have a pure and simple friendship," says Mark. "It is like a Jonathan and David kind of relationship. I think there are indescribable blessings in a friendship like ours. You know it is one that God has orchestrated."

This year marks their 11<sup>th</sup> year attending *Family Retreat* together! "Mark and I are more than buddies," says Justin. "We share a lot together. Mark encourages me in faith and in my ongoing work to get my high school diploma. Our relationship is a strong support outside of other influences."



The impact of *Family Retreat* lasts so much longer than just one week. It's a catalyst for life-long discipleship!

## From Nashville ▼

Nearly two decades ago, Shirley was faced with one of the biggest choices of her life. Her granddaughter, Roseanne, needed a primary caregiver. Raising Roseanne would be a life-long commitment, and it would not be an easy one.

Roseanne had suffered severe physical trauma as a child, sustaining multiple permanent brain injuries. Like countless grandparents around the world, Shirley stepped in as her caregiver—afraid but determined.

Now Roseanne is in her thirties, and Shirley has been there for her every step of the way. Thankfully, Roseanne and Shirley never walked this journey alone because Roseanne's aunt, Maxine, serves as her secondary caregiver.

Shirley and Maxine are used to hard work, and they love caring for Roseanne. But they needed some respite and encouragement. When they heard about *Family Retreat*, this family of three knew they had to attend!

"I have never been treated better in my life than how I was treated at *Family Retreat*," says Shirley. "I did not have to worry about my granddaughter. Her volunteer buddy made us feel welcome and loved. We were treated like queens! There was so much love, and I didn't have to worry about Roseanne being mistreated. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves!"

"It was amazing to see how much love was being shown among strangers!" says Maxine.

Roseanne thrived amid all the fun-filled activities at *Family Retreat*. Throughout the week, she could be found crafting, building puzzles, or painting a large farm mural. Although Roseanne was usually quiet, her ever-present grin testified to her joy.

And on the final night of *Family Retreat*, Roseanne graced the talent show stage, singing her favorite song, *This Little Light of Mine*. She delivered a refreshing performance for volunteers and participants alike, shining her little light for everyone to see. By the time Roseanne was finished, everyone in the room was singing along, punctuating her song with cheers and hand motions remembered from childhood.

"Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine!" sang Roseanne and the entire *Family Retreat* community.

Roseanne let her light shine at *Family Retreat*. And she is not the only one. Because at *Family Retreat*, every member of the family finds a safe place to share their gifts for God.



"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."  
Matthew 5:14-16

# Jesus is Our Anchor

## From New Mexico ▼

All too often, the excitement and joy experienced when military personnel return home falter as Veterans assimilate back into civilian life. It's a cry in the middle of the night caused by the ravages of post-traumatic stress (PTS). Or an unsteadiness in daily tasks—a traumatic brain injury taking its toll. Sometimes an unexpected trigger unleashes a flashback...

Just ask David, who served in Naval Intelligence for six years. After several deployments and missions supporting his brothers and sisters in arms, he has struggled with finding community now that he's home.

"Combat Veterans don't always have community when they get out of the military," says David. "Once we get out, you don't really have neighbors that are combat Veterans and understand military life or what we've been through."

"I was trying to find some help for my wife, Deborah, as well as myself," continues David. "It is not easy for spouses when we come home. They don't—and can't—understand what we have been through. Deborah wasn't familiar with that whole world of dealing with a spouse with PTS, sleeplessness, and social anxiety. But she is learning to adapt and understand me more, as well as to support me."

A real turning point came when David, Deborah, and their son, Benny, came to *Warrior Getaway*. "I can go to the VA and find other Veterans to talk to, but there is not much out there for the spouses and families. When we found *Warrior Getaway*, it changed everything for us."

"The biggest takeaway for me is community and connecting with spouses who get it," says Deborah. "We're vulnerable and honest with each other, and we realize we are not alone. Regardless of the flavor of each story, we are struggling and

coping in the same ways. This kind of life stretches and grows you. I'm grateful for the change in my life, and watching David's growth is amazing."

"We have gone to *Warrior Getaway* multiple times, and every time I didn't want to go," admits David. It's just easier to remain in isolation. "But Deborah encourages me, and then we go, and it really helps. Having been through *Warrior Getaway* with Deborah has enhanced our communication and made us closer because she understands me better. It gives us the time and space to talk about the relevance of day-to-day activities and what my day may look like if I have had a bad night."

Continuing to trust God, Deborah has gotten clearer insight on how to meet and adapt to David's needs. And David has been healing from PTS and working through his social anxiety. He has also spent time learning from Veterans who have gone before him. Now he looks forward to serving at a future *Warrior Getaway* so he can help fellow Veterans coming up behind him.



Your prayers and support bring help and healing hope to United States Veterans and their families—like David, Deborah, and Benny. Thank you for honoring the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms!

## From Illinois ▼

Shauna always knew there would be a "changing of the guard." Her parents, Burt and Sharon, spoke about the family's future plans openly. BJ, Shauna's brother, is nineteen years her junior and has Down syndrome. While health and age permitted, Burt and Sharon would care for BJ. But one day, things would have to change...

Burt, Sharon, and BJ attended *Family Retreat* for more than twenty years. Shauna never joined them, but then her parents' health started to decline, and coming to *Family Retreat* became too challenging for them. For the first time, Shauna and BJ set off for *Family Retreat*—just the two of them.

Shauna wasn't sure what to expect, but she remembers for certain the moment her tears began to flow. Arriving at *Family Retreat* with BJ, Shauna felt like a red carpet rolled out before them. Immediately she saw that BJ was known and loved. And so was she.

"Being at my first *Family Retreat* was, quite frankly, overwhelming," says Shauna. "I had seen pictures and heard my parents talk about it, but to experience it in person was something I still can't adequately put into words!"

Throughout the week, Shauna eased into the warmth of her women's Bible study group. She also bonded with



"BJ and I left *Family Retreat* with full hearts and full souls," says Shauna.

BJ's dedicated volunteer buddy. Even more importantly, her love for her brother grew beyond measure.

"This was the first time BJ and I had ever had such one-on-one time," says Shauna. "It was fantastic!"

Just months after that *Family Retreat* in 2021, Jesus called Sharon home to heaven. At the same time, Burt decided to move into a seniors' community. Shauna and her family now faced a major decision. She and her husband sold their home and moved into the house that Burt and Sharon built, paving the way for Shauna to take BJ permanently into her care.

In a season thick with grief and strained with change, Shauna hesitated to attend *Family Retreat*. But she made the decision to come again. And among the loving community of Joni and Friends, God provided the exact Anchor her whole family needed.

Shauna explains, "The retreat theme was 'Anchor for The Soul.' It was just what my weary, hurting, overburdened soul needed. Having now experienced what my parents did at *Family Retreat*, I tell everyone I can about it!"

Shauna continues, "I'm especially excited because my husband will join me this year. Now he, too, can experience what *Family Retreat* is: an oasis for the weary, a refreshing restart for the exhausted, a boost for the burdened, and a place to meet Jesus in new and meaningful ways."

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

HEBREWS 6:19

# Bless Your Loved Ones & Share the Love of Jesus!

When you give a gift in honor of your loved ones, you share the gift of the Gospel with people living with disabilities worldwide! To make a contribution in memory or in honor of someone special—or to acknowledge a special occasion—visit [joniandfriends.org/donate](http://joniandfriends.org/donate) or call us at **818.707.5664** today!

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