

ALAN BEALS – Social, Adventuresome, and Curious – And Just Happens To Have Down Syndrome

By Annette Walker

For Alan Beals participating in the Be Beautiful, Be Yourself Jet Set Fashion Show was the finale of a series of events that took place earlier this year. He auditioned for the show during the summer and was selected as a participant.

Then Channel 9 indicated that it would do a public service announcement about the event and wanted one of the youth to be involved. That prompted Darlene Beals, Alan's mother, to make a video of her son at a Boy Scout meeting. Channel 9 used footage from that video. Having jazz musician Quincy Jones as the narrator for the PSA made the event even more special for Alan. He and the other youth in the group had their photograph taken with Jones and singer/songwriter Josh Kelley.

"Alan is a vivacious 13-year-old Boy Scout who happens to have Down syndrome," said Anca Elena Call, Special Projects Manager at the Anna and John Sie Foundation.

In addition to regular participation in his Boy Scout troop's activities, Alan participates in programs of the Arapahoe County library. Only an adventuresome and fearless person would be willing to get involved in the library's Doggie Tails program. In this unique activity, people read stories to dogs. Darlene Beals reports that Alan enjoys this.



Thomas Malone (left) and Alan Beals (right) are escorted by a Denver Nuggets dancer. Photo by Bernard Grant

Alan is active in the youth group and attends catechism classes at St. Peter's Lutheran Church.

A seventh-grade student at the Campus Middle School in the Cherry Creek School District, Alan participates in the Color Guard and in the band where he plays various percussion instruments.

"He can read the music notes for the percussion section," his mother said. "His great motivation is

that his brother and sister both play several reed and keyboard instruments," she continued. "Alan is not one to feel left out."

He also plays on the 7th grade basketball team. Darlene Beals points out that he's on the regular team, not a special one for students with disabilities.

Regular or typical versus special is a big issue for people with Down syndrome. There is a debate about whether those with this condition should be integrated into regular settings or isolated with people with special needs.

The Beal family prefers a mix. "Alan spends 60 percent of his time in school in regular classes, and 40 percent in special needs settings," his mother said. "Some of the students in his regular class and basketball team know him from elementary school and are aware not only of his needs, but his capabilities."

Darlene Beals describes Alan as "naturally agreeable" rather than shy. "He is compassionate, empathetic and has a sense of humor." She is aware that some people with Down syndrome are shy.

The Beal family prefers to explain Alan's condition to people. "I'd rather have people ask me questions rather than stare," said Darlene Beals. "I like helping them become compassionate rather than just curious." ■

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science to be successful with everything you are very emotional about, and you have to back it up with a strong sense of science. That's another reason why John Sie is so strong because of his technology background."

"The truth is, you are terminal for a higher power. And you have to acknowledge that higher power and have humility with your creativity and grace with your success or God will walk out the room."

After 60 years of being in the music business, Jones has seen and experienced many changes in it. In 1999, he was asked in USA Today which single piece of technology affected your genre the most? He emphatically said the Fender bass. "We had the first one in 1953 with Lionel Hampton. We didn't know what it was – an electric bass. We got blasted by critics in Paris who said this is a band that doesn't have a bass. What's the matter with them? We did jazz records with it at first. We didn't know," Jones said.

"But without that instrument, there would be no rock and roll, or no Motown. The electric guitar came about in 1939, and it was just waiting for a partner for all those years – before it became an electric rhythm section. It changed a lot of things and was powerful."

Needless to say, Jones has touched many lives. But he was also touched by the lives of others – one being Michael Jackson. As close as he was to Jackson, Jones feels there was nothing he could have done if given the opportunity to turn back the hands of time. "It doesn't work that way. People are going to do what they want to do, especially when they have that kind of impact, it is very hard to get through. And he was aware of his impact," Jones said.

Jones and Oprah jokingly talked about starting an Academy of Success to assist athletes, actors, rappers, musicians or whoever overcome challenges and learn how to prevent mistakes before they become successful. He said, "The problem is as a star, you get people around you who say you can do no wrong, everything is perfect and that's not real! Because if you think you deserve the success and adulation and money, you are wrong.

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