



Adventures In The Mainstream: Coming Of Age With Down Syndrome

Greg Palmer

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(2006 Independent Publishers Book Awards: Honorable Mention in Autobiography/Memoir Category) (2005 ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Award: Finalist in Autobiography/Memoir Category) Like many parents, Greg Palmer worries about his son's future. But his son Ned's last year of high school raises concerns and anxieties for him that most parents don't experience. Ned has Down syndrome; when high school ends for him, school is out forever. The questions loom: What's next? How will Ned negotiate the world without the structure of school? Will he find a rewarding job in something other than food service? To help him sort out these questions and document his son's transition from high school to work, Palmer, an award-winning writer and producer of PBS documentaries, keeps a journal that s the basis of this thoughtful and entertaining book. Ned's talents and interests in poetry, music, and history help him connect with other travelers on a nautical excursion around the British Isles, while his father watches from a distance. The years Palmer and his wife nurtured Ned's interests seem to pay off when Ned shares a favorite poem with a stranger or wins "Employee of the Month." Gratified and a little surprised at how easily Ned sometimes lives by his wits, Palmer also acknowledges the parenting challenges: Ned has some gaps in self-help skills; rarely considers eating anything but peeled wieners for breakfast; and needs help knowing when to curb his passions, such as bombarding people with unsolicited accounts of his family genealogy. Preparing Ned for the working world teaching him to handle money and public transportation, and finding him a job is both amusing and stressful. Palmer wisely stays out of the way when Ned is working happily in the same office and he recognizes the value of good job coaching when his son is lucky enough to get it. But it's trickier business when Ned loses money and skips the bus. Worry over Ned's vulnerabilities leads to discussing what it means to have Down syndrome and, Palmer hopes, offering him a dose of reality. ADVENTURES IN THE MAINSTREAM is a lively and insightful account allowing readers to enjoy Ned's strengths and foibles just as his father does. This personal chronicle also gives us a better understanding of what's involved for parent and child in a young man's journey from adolescence toward adulthood and greater independence.

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