

### ***At Home with Uncle Daniel!***

March 2023 Caregiver of the Month, Kat White  
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services



Kat White began caring for her brother, Daniel, and younger siblings at an early age. At age 18 months, Daniel was diagnosed with epilepsy and intellectual disabilities, and as he grew older, the frequency and severity of his seizures rapidly increased. By the age of 13, Daniel was having seizures on a daily basis. It was determined that tumors in Daniel’s brain were the source of his many seizures. After struggling with the idea of a risky surgery, Daniel’s parents made the decision for doctor’s to remove one-third of his brain. The surgery was successful at eliminating the seizures completely, but the unfortunate result left Daniel with cognitive deficits and the inability to learn new things. After the surgery, Daniel was able to heal and made a strong recovery. He graduated high school and started a career at the Sheltered Industries in Sullivan, MO.

For many years, Daniel lived at home with his parents, however in a turn of events, Daniel found himself without a place to live in 2004. As Daniel’s big sister and protector, Kat immediately stepped in and moved Daniel into her and her husband’s home. They knew Daniel would not be able to live independently. Without an intervention and the proper support, Daniel may have ended up in a long-term care facility. It was an easy decision for Kat and her husband (name) to make. Daniel’s permanent home would be with them. Daniel’s move to Manchester, MO meant relocating to a new town and leaving the job he loved.

During a family Christmas celebration in December 2016, Kat made the announcement that after 16 long months of waiting, Daniel was hired by Lafayette Industries with a start date of January 18. Kat had been working in the background to help locate the perfect opportunity for Daniel. The family cheered and congratulated Daniel in an air of excitement. His face lit up. Daniel was so excited to be able to get back to work and socialize again. It would be the perfect fit for Daniel, and he has worked at the same job ever since. Daniel could not love his job more!

Daniel enjoys playing cards and video games, collecting Pokemon and Yugioh cards and seeing the latest movies at the theatre. Daniel is a sports fanatic -- watching WWE wrestling, attending Cardinal’s and Blue’s games as often as he can and bowling with a Special Olympics league every Tuesday. Kat joyously shares, “Watching Daniel win his gold metals with the Special Olympics is always rewarding. He loves seeing his hard work and effort pay off!”

Kat does everything she can to maintain a supportive environment for Daniel at home. Daniel cannot be alone overnight and needs oversight and supervision to remain healthy and safe. Daniel must be reminded to perform his personal care and sometimes needs help with more complicated tasks. Kat explained, "Being a caregiver is something I have always done for my family in more than just one way." Kat is devoted to Daniel as well as her other family members.

In November 2021, Kat gave birth to her one and only son, Talon. "We struggled with infertility and heart break after heart break until God gave us our son." Kat is grateful for her family every single day and doesn't take anything for granted. Kat explained, "Balancing a home and family along with caring for someone makes you stronger. You learn that life at any minute can take a turn. It is important to enjoy and live in the moment!"

Daniel is now 41 years old. He has three nephews and four nieces ranging from the age of 15 months to 16 years old. Daniel entertains everyone with a very funny impersonation of Donald Duck. The kids have their way with Daniel and climb on him as a human jungle gym. They enjoy playing Candy Land and card games together.

Kat and her husband, Brandon, have demanding careers. Kat works as an Executive Assistant for the Chief of Police in Manchester, MO and Brandon is a Battalion Chief for the West County EMS and Fire Protection District. Kat has learned that taking care of someone with a disability is challenging and requires understanding and lots of patience. She states, "Having family live with you is difficult and finding balance is hard." Kat credits her husband for his love and support, "I am extremely lucky to have such a patient and understanding husband. Without him and his help, caring for Daniel would not have been possible."