

Hello, My name is Lisa Janke. I am a pediatric physical therapist with Androscoggin Home Healthcare and Hospice, working with children with many different diagnoses and a wide variety of physical difficulties and capabilities. I have been a physical therapist for almost 23 years working in both Maine and Virginia. I have worked in schools, preschools, daycares, outpatient clinics, hospitals, rehab facilities, nursing homes and now in the homes of the patients I have the privilege of working with. I also have a great love of the outdoors. I grew up fishing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, canoeing, scouting and retrieving with my dad. I now have the opportunity to have shared that love and experiences with my own children, and currently hold hunting, trapping and fishing licenses myself. I know what it feels like to have a successful hunt first hand. I also know how rewarding it is for the children that I work with to be able to do things that their peers are doing, that their families are doing, and how disappointed and discouraged that they can be when they don't have the physical capabilities to do just that.

I worked with a preteen girl 20 years ago in Virginia who lived with cerebral palsy. She was an incredibly intelligent little girl, with parents who were both college professors in literature, and she enjoyed reading Shakespeare for fun. She was very good at articulating the challenges she faced, and how those challenges made her feel. I was able to participate in adaptive skiing with her in Virginia, and her face just lit up, grinning from ear to ear. She also worked in the pool doing aquatic therapy with me. I still remember to this day, during one session she told me how much she loved being in the pool. When I asked her why, she told me "because I am just like everyone else". SHE WAS JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. She was able to do what they were doing. No, she wasn't able to do it just like they were, but she was doing it successfully with them. This hit me so powerfully that this message has stuck with me to this day. I'm sure I don't recall her exact words, but the message definitely left its mark.

This is just one story. I have so many stories just like this that I could talk to you for hours and never run out of examples of how being able to participate in the same activities as their peers and families makes such a significant impact on the quality of life that these amazing children live. However, I have just one more story that I would like to share, and it's from before I became a physical therapist. I remember as a young adult my father, my best friend's father and someone my dad met through a hunting chat room providing an opportunity similar to this. This man that my father had met, named Mike Macko, had started a Christian group called A Hunt Above in Mississippi. Mr. Macko had contacted him asking if my dad may be able to help him provide a teenage boy the opportunity to participate in a lobster fishing trip. The group that Mr. Macko had created provides deer, hog, even alligator hunts to people with disabilities. I don't know the requirements to be considered, but I do know that it is similar to what Make A Wish does. I also know that he continues to provide these opportunities to this day. This particular teenager had a diagnosis of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, which at that time had a life expectancy in the late teens to early 20s. My dad and my best friend's dad were able to connect Mr. Macko with a local fisherman and assist with organizing this opportunity for this teen. I was not involved in any of the logistics, but what I do remember is setting up a barbeque for the entire family following their fishing trip. I can still remember the joy and excitement on this child's face as he recounted all of his adventures that day to those of us who did not go on the trip with him. And I recall the love and gratitude of his loved ones as that child shared his story. I honestly think this event may have had a

part in my decision to pursue pediatrics rather than the sports rehab setting I had originally thought that I would pursue.....I mean what New England athlete doesn't want to be the PT for the Red Sox?

As someone who truly loves the outdoors and the enjoyment that it provides, and has a passion for helping children with disabilities be as successful as they can be in life, I feel that this would be an amazing experience for not only the child, but for his family, and all of those that they touch. This may also encourage those children and families to develop or further develop their love of the outdoors and of what Maine has to offer. I ask that you approve this bill for these wonderful, resilient children.