



HOW THE YMCA HELPED RODNEY REDUCE HIS SOCIAL ANXIETY

YMCA Allard Center of Goffstown, a branch of The Granite YMCA

From a young age, **Rodney struggled to find a place where he felt supported and accepted.** His autism and social anxiety made it hard for him to connect with others, and even in school, he was often isolated. In addition to the challenge of lacking places where he could go to engage and make friends, limited opportunities to be active made it hard for him to maintain a healthy weight.

After moving to Weare, NH in 2015, Rodney joined the YMCA Allard Center of Goffstown and began participating in group wellness classes. While initially nervous to be in a new place trying new things, Rodney soon felt at home thanks to the friendly and welcoming people that he met, and has become one of the Allard Center's most dedicated and enthusiastic class participants. He regularly goes to indoor cycling classes, although his new favorite is Step and Sculpt. Rodney has a smile on the entire time he is at the Y, and his can-do attitude and genuine care and consideration for others are an inspiration for staff and members alike. In addition to **feeling physically healthier, his anxiety has lessened significantly**, allowing him to enjoy things that he could not previously, including going to the mall, to the movies, and bowling.

"Everybody cheers him on, supports him, and accepts him. **To see him flourish in the things that he does, makes me so happy. The Y means everything to him**, and he would come seven days a week if he could," commented Rodney's mother.

