

# Born with Special Needs

*Allen Lovelace*

**BEFORE YOU READ:** What do you think the author means by “special needs”?

## My Parents Are Always Here for Me

I have special needs. I was born with autism a long time ago. My parents did all they could for me, their only son. They always loved me; they didn't want anything bad to happen to me.

When the hard times happen, when I am in trouble, they are always there for me. When the boys at school were trying to get me, they took me out of that school. When I need something, they buy it for me.

My parents were there when I graduated from high school. They were there when I was sick. They were there when I got engaged. I called them on the cell phone and told them.

## I Don't Miss a Single Day of School

When I finished high school in 2001, I was 20 years old. My math and reading were at third and fourth grade levels. My spelling was at a seventh-grade level. I went to school every day. I didn't miss a single day. Now, thanks to Literacy Chicago, my reading is at a sixth grade level. It keeps getting better. The more I put into school, the more I get from it. I have perfect attendance. I want to get the achievement award to make my family proud of me.

## I Want to Share My Ideas

I like to write because I want to share my ideas. I can write a story like this. It is about me, my mother's son, who is autistic. I love to be creative. I keep my notebook on the table, and I am always ready to write. I want to publish my writing. I want to make my family proud.



## I Want a Job

I used to go to Ada S. McKinley Community Services. They help people like me find a job. I did piecework. I made Chia Pets. Piecework means you get paid for each piece you make. I earned a good paycheck. I had money in my pocket. I don't go now because they don't have piecework anymore.

I want a job. I want to call the grocery store. I want to get a job as a bagger. My aunt said I should not get a job. She said it would mess up my social security benefits.

**AFTER YOU READ:** Write a letter to Allen. Share any of your own experiences that relate to his. Mention details from this essay in your letter.

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*Allen Lovelace is a writer living in Chicago. He is a student at Literacy Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. He has not missed a day in the two years he's been attending the school. He graduated from South Central Community Service High School in Chicago in 2001.*