

As you all know, our family has been participating in the Autism Society Central VA 5K that helps raise funds in the greater Richmond area for the past 15 years. We are so excited for the return of this event and the opportunity to gather together **in-person** to celebrate. And this year is extra special because ASCV is celebrating the **20th anniversary** of the ASCV 5K & Family Fun day! In years past I have always sent my family and friends a fundraising kick-off message by giving you an update on Eli and talking about the joys and challenges autism has brought our family. However, this year I requested Eli's 20 family members and friends to tell us why they find him so special. As they say "it takes a village" and Eli is beyond privileged to have these people in his life as his biggest advocates, supporters and fans.

Eli is special to me because...

1. He has a loving nature and a big heart. (Nanna)
2. He has genuine joy in such small parts of life, like noticing a wall was painted or that you got a new light bulb. It shows us that we should all try to notice the little things in life and find joy in those things. (Mackenzie, cousin)
3. He loves doing things with me like riding his bike, going fishing/golfing, playing video games and going on adventures. (Nathan, dad)
4. He sees the good in EVERYONE! (Monica, aunt)
5. He has unconditional and unwavering love that he shows to everyone he meets. (Hannah, cousin)
6. He is always joyful and brings out the laughter in me. (Graydon, uncle)
7. He is kind and teaches me what kindness means to others. (Mema)
8. He creates good memories and reminds us of all the memories we made together when we were younger. (Emily, cousin)
9. He has the ability to effortlessly light up a room as soon as he walks in. (Murfee, cousin)
10. He is extraordinary. He truly brings out the best in me, and I am proud to call him my best friend. (Claire, BFF)
11. He has many catch phrases and movie quotes that always makes us laugh. He makes people laugh at the best times. (Colin, cousin & Cierra, cousin-in-law)
12. He leads with his heart in all that he does- he is a rare breed amongst a sea of people who have lost their own hearts. He is a trailblazer of his own generation. (Nicole, cousin)
13. We both like new adventures. (Granddaddy)
14. He lives a life that only other humans can aspire to be. He loves everyone unconditionally, he's always kind, he shows up regardless the situation & feverishly finds the best in all people. (Michele, aunt)
15. Of the amount of love he has to give. I've never met anyone with such a big heart & I know that no matter what kind of day I'm having, as soon as I talk to him, I immediately feel happier. (Libbie, BFF)
16. His joy is contagious and he always sees the best in everyone. (Sharon, aunt)
17. He treats everyone the way I wish I could and hence makes me strive to be a better person. (Marc, uncle)
18. He always makes me smile. (Holly, cousin)
19. His genuine love for his family and the smile that he brings me for every Knuffle Bunny performance. (Hayden, cousin)
20. He never has to look for the good or joy... he creates it for himself and effortlessly spreads it to others. (Jennifer, mom)

Please join my family again in helping to continue making a difference in the autism community. All funds raised provide much needed support to families and individuals like Eli living with autism, and all the money stays in the greater Richmond area. I hope you will consider supporting Team **bELI**eve in one of the following ways:

1. Make an online **donation** to the ASCV (Jennifer Barnum- Team **bELI**eve):
<https://runsignup.com/Race/68858/Donate/xQLoS0IKodfNu0eO>
2. Join Team **bELI**eve on May 14 at Crump Park (OR compete in the virtual challenge by logging your walking/running/biking miles):
<https://runsignup.com/Race/Register/RaceGroup-1?raceId=68858>

Love,

Jennifer & Nathan (Eli's #1 **bELI**evers)