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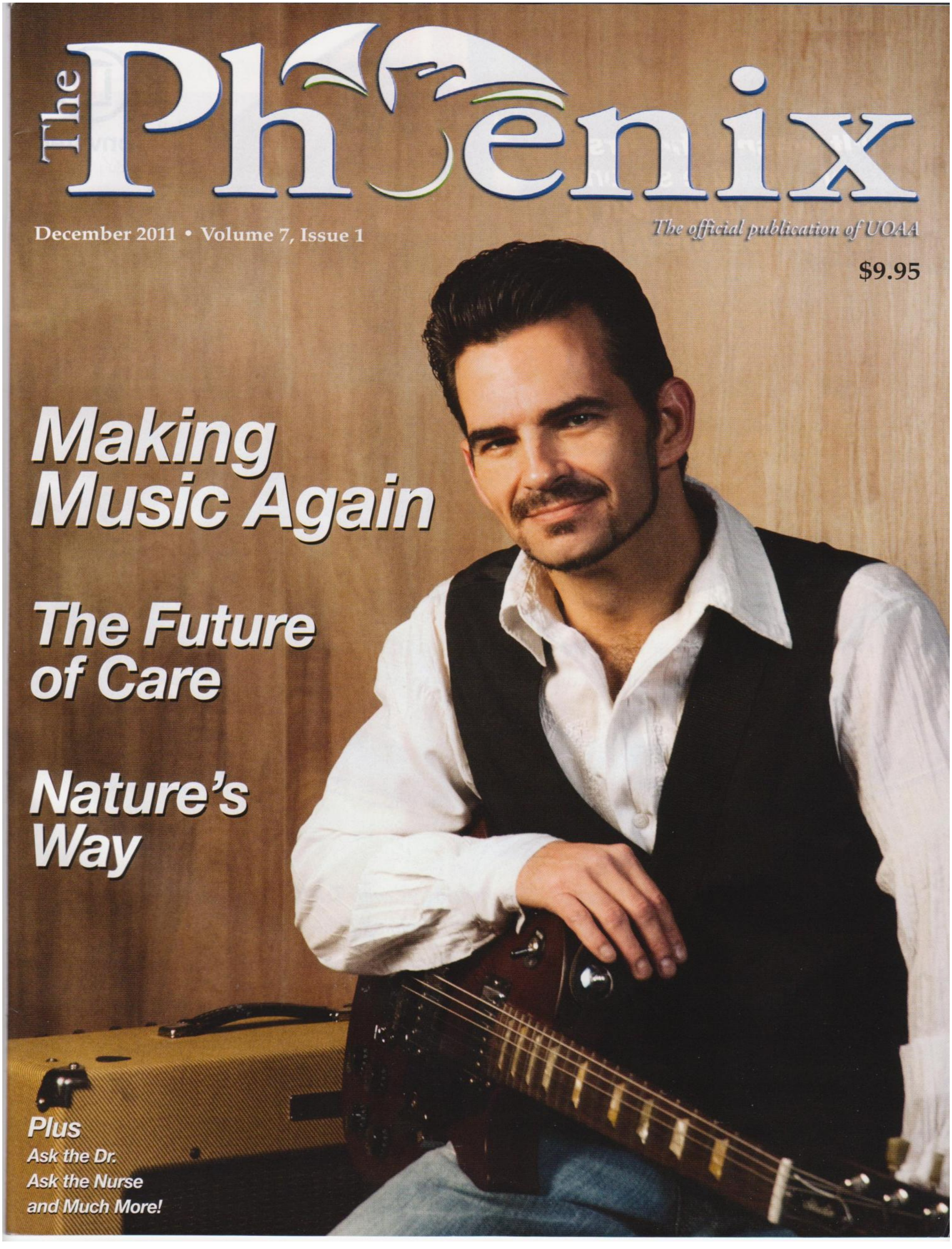

Making Music Again

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Nature's Way

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Ask the Dr.
Ask the Nurse
and Much More!

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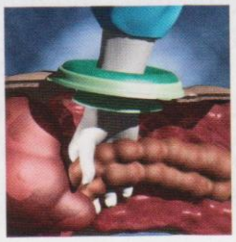

Departments

UOAA United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc.

UOAA's Mission

- UOAA is an association of affiliated, nonprofit, support groups who are committed to the improvement of the quality of life of people who have, or will have, an intestinal or urinary diversion.

- It is dedicated to the provision of information, advocacy and service to, and for, its affiliated support groups, their members and the intestinal/urinary diversion community at large.

- It is organized to grow and develop while remaining independent and financially viable.

Membership in UOAA is open to any former UOA chapter or other nonprofit support group. UOAA has an IRS 501(c)(3) charity status that affiliated support groups can use.

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Jamie's Dream Team

Recent colostomate is on a mission to make others happy

By Jamie Holmes

The strong words of my young mother in her late teenage years, "This is my baby and she will live. I love her." The support of my grandmother, who stood by our side day in and day out for the last 24 years.

These guide my well-being to inspire young children and adults with whom I am privileged to be connected. They fuel my efforts to lift the spirits and ease the burden of those suffering from serious illness, injury, disability or trauma.

My name is Jamie Holmes. I am a 24-year-old native of Pittsburgh. I was diagnosed in utero with VATER Syndrome. VATER is an acronym: V for vertebrae; A for anus; T for trachea; E for esophagus; and R for renal (kidneys). I was born with abnormalities in all of those areas.

I have had more than 30 surgeries and/or medical procedures since birth, including surgeries to reconstruct my esophagus, trachea and lower intestine, and to fuse several vertebrae in my spine. One of my kidneys has disintegrated, and my remaining kidney does not fully function.

For the first few years of my life, I lived with a colostomy. Recently, my colon started malfunctioning, which made surgery necessary to create another colostomy.

A 'Normal' Life

Growing up, my family never treated me differently because of my medical conditions. I was treated no differently than my sister. I was never singled out, other than those frequent doctor visits, hospitalizations and treatments. I believe this sense of "normalcy" has been very important throughout my life and has helped me to be well adjusted today. I stress this to many others whom I have come in contact with over the years. If someone with a medical issue or need is treated differently, they will start to believe that themselves, and they will be treated differently in the outside world. If you do not treat a person as they have issues, no one else will either, and they will be able to live a fuller life, as I have.

As a child, I was seldom without pain and sometimes I was embarrassed about my condition. When friends and family showed up to support me with balloons and other gifts, I felt like a princess. I remember wanting to share this feeling of joy with the other kids I would meet at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. I wanted was to give them my balloons and have them feel a little of the happiness that others had brought to me.

Mallory, in a horse-drawn carriage, had her dream of being a princess fulfilled.

My Mission

Despite the pain and suffering I have, my heart has always been with others who are suffering. I have chosen to turn my pain into a positive experience by fulfilling dreams of others who are fighting their own battles with medical issues and heartache.

In 2005, I founded Jamie's Dream Team, a Pennsylvania-based nonprofit corporation. Jamie's Dream Team is managed by a nine-member community-based board of directors. This public charity provides assistance and makes distributions to or on behalf of qualifying individuals who are handicapped, disabled, terminally ill, severely injured or suffering from a serious medical condition, disease or trauma.

Unlike other nonprofit granting organizations, Jamie's Dream Team is not restricted to those who are terminally ill. Nor is it restricted by age. I feel that no matter what you are going through, big or small, everyone should have at least one day in life to put their issues on the back burner and make the day about them, not their medical issues. That being said, allow me to introduce two of our dream recipients, Mallory and Tom.

A Dream Comes True

The first dream fulfilled by Jamie's Dream Team was for a 5-year-old girl diagnosed with neuroblastoma (cancerous tumors involving nerve tissue). Like many little girls, Mallory loved princesses and dreamed of becoming one. It was the Christmas season and Mallory was too ill to go see Santa Claus. I dressed up as a princess and took Santa Claus and presents to Mallory.

Jamie's Dream Team also held a princess party for Mallory. She wore a beautiful princess gown and was driven to the party in a horse-drawn carriage. Mallory and her family were treated like royalty. All who attended will forever remember how beautiful and happy Mallory was that day.

Unfortunately, Mallory passed away when she was only six. Her sweet memory has left a memorable impact on my life and has inspired Jamie's Dream Team to fulfill many more dreams.

Taking Flight

Tom was an 84-year-old Air Force veteran who served as flight instructor for P-51 Mustang fighter planes during World War II. In his later years, Tom suffered from Alzheimer's and Lewy body disease (a common cause of dementia in the elderly). Despite the memory loss and other effects of those diseases, Tom remembered everything about the Air Force. He dreamed of flying again and seeing the world from the air once more.

Jamie's Dream Team was able to fulfill Tom's dream. He was by an American Legion Post honor guard and then took off on a flight over southwestern Pennsylvania. Tom's wife, three children and his five grandchildren all were on hand to see Tom's thrill, excitement and enthusiasm at being able to fly again.

Dream Season

I have been on an emotional roller coaster ever since I was told I would need to have a permanent colostomy. The mental stress haunts me daily. This has been a drastic change in my life. However, With the support of my wonderful family and friends, the pain eases with each passing day. Being on a mission to make others happy is also comforting.

We are currently working to fulfill holiday dreams. We will provide families with illness Christmas gifts and holiday cheer. To support the mission of Jamie's Dream Team, please visit http://jamiesdreamteam.myfastsite.net or email jamiesdreamteam@gmail.com.