



He's a man of few words, but that doesn't stop him from letting you know just what's on his mind.

Ryan Nelson, 24, was diagnosed with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy when he was six months old – a condition that makes him unable to speak or have the use of his limbs.

Though Nelson, who is confined to a wheelchair, isn't able to speak by himself he has enough vocal noises and commands to chat your ear off.

His mother, Kim Steele, helps him communicate through eye signals, body language and the occasional grunt.

At age 24, Nelson started the next big chapter in his life – like many of his peers.

The Flin Flon native was able to check off his biggest goal to date.

He found a roommate, moved to Brandon and is enjoying life.

Sure, there are some modifications to Nelson's house that he shares with his roommate.

They share a three-bedroom one-level house on a quiet street in Brandon complete with a flower garden and seasonal decorations.

On the outside, it's like any other home on the street. On the inside, it's designed for practicality and comfort.

Nelson has a tracking system built into the ceiling that carries him from his bedroom to the bathroom and back while he rests in a sling.

Until January 2014, when he first moved to the city, Nelson relied on the help of Steele and other family and friends with every day tasks.

Nelson's words transfer from his thoughts to Steele's mouth as she explains he's a "happy, content" guy.

"This was one of his big goals," she said, while looking at Nelson for the approving nod. "When he turned 25, okay, maybe that part was me, for him it was sooner (to move out on his own). But he's wanted to move out on his own for a long time."

"He knew I was starting to get tired and was struggling," Steele said. "And our house wasn't adapted or set up right (for Nelson)."

Through the help of In The Company of Friends – an organization that helps those living with special needs become more independent – Nelson and Steele were able to choose a house in Brandon that suited his needs. "It was just meant to be."

Nelson now calls Green Acres home where the older houses in Brandon are located and loves his new chapter in life.

"It's just beautiful," said Steele. "Everything about it was great."

Nelson had a smile bigger than words could express as Steele spoke about the details of the house.

Because Nelson has limitations on a number of everyday tasks, he has to rely on the help of workers in the house. Again with the help of In The Company of Friends, the family was able to choose their own support

staff, hold interviews and pick them based on Nelson's needs.

"That was one of the features we loved," said Steele.

The pair found it easier to find the help they were looking for in a larger city as Nelson's resources became thinner as he grew into adulthood.

"There were a lot of people to choose from because there's a lot more people in Brandon," said Steele, noting that having a university nursing program in Brandon is a bonus. "And in Flin Flon you're sort of limited on that spectrum."

Once Nelson and Steele hired the staff of roughly a dozen that they were comfortable with, things were falling into place – and quickly, too.

With help from In The Company of Friends as well as his own family and friends' support letters, Nelson's funding application was approved in record time.

"It was so friggen cold that year," Steele laughed. "What were we thinking?"

Steele helped Nelson move into his new home in January 2014.

With a big grin on his face, Steele said Nelson was "really lucky" to have this opportunity.

"He just loves it there," Steele said as an audible happy sound came from Nelson.

As far as doctors could tell, Nelson was a healthy baby boy waiting to make his debut in the world.

But complications during delivery left Nelson without oxygen to his brain, resulting in cerebral palsy.

"Because he was my first child, when I brought him home I thought he was fine," said Steele, remembering back to 1990. "Then of course they sent over a nurse from public health and they did a check up. They did some follow up tests and of course some of the things that he should have been doing at six months he wasn't doing."

Nelson's diagnosis came at six months old. He was diagnosed with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy.

"He's not paralyzed," said Steele, dismissing a common misconception. "But the muscles don't receive the message (from the brain) to cooperate. And that's from going without oxygen during delivery."

Nelson doesn't have the use of his limbs, but he does have full feeling in all four limbs.

Spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy can differ in each person. For Nelson, he cannot speak and his limbs don't get the messages required to move.

But it doesn't stop him from doing the things that he enjoys like reading, bowling, skating and listening to music.

"He's really so lucky," said Kim. "He's got quite the life."

Another big smile came from Ryan. "He's got people waiting on him all the time," said Kim.

Like any 24-year-old Ryan knows what he likes – and loves.

He loves country music – Taylor Swift in particular – he loves to eat, spend time with family and friends, read and travel.

Nelson has been to Florida a few times,

New Orleans and even Graceland in Memphis.

He was able to check off moving into his own house from his bucket list and now he looks to a few more tasks.

He would like to go to Las Vegas someday.

“But I told him he has to learn to stay up past 10 pm,” Steele laughed.

“He’s seen a lot and even a lot more than other people have,” she said. “But he would really like to do more travelling.”

He also has big dreams of attending the Ellen Show with Ellen DeGeneres as well as meeting Swift.

“We were so close to meeting Taylor a while ago,” Steele said.

Nelson, Steele and other family members made the trek to Saskatoon to watch the Canadian Country Music Awards in 2012 and were able to stand on the green carpet.

“Taylor was the last person to arrive and we were yelling and screaming, but she had body guards with her and went down the carpet. We were so close,” recalls Steele.

A trip to Nashville is also on Nelson’s to-do list.

It was the biggest grin of the night as Kim said, “And I think Taylor lives there, too.”

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