

..... WORLD
AUTISM

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SUNDAY APRIL 2, 2017

AWARENESS DAY

A HOME TO CALL HIS OWN

Kirk is an enthusiastic and high-functioning young man with autism. You might know Kirk from his days of television stardom on *The Dream House* back in 2013.

The show followed three irreverent and energetic young adults as they pursued their dream to fly the nest and live together.

Asserting his independence and leaving his childhood home was great for Kirk, and he certainly enjoyed the excitement of the 10-week TV series, but his dream went further.

What Kirk really wanted was not to share a house with other people, but to have a home of his own.

Since 2013, Directions Disability Support Services has worked with Kirk to further develop his independence skills.

This has not been limited to the usual shopping, cooking and laundry. With Kirk receiving help to participate confidently in his community.

With the help of his support workers, Kirk has worked hard on monitoring how he feels and acts in the company of others, learning to modify his behaviour to fit in with people around him.

In a letter to Directions, Kirk's mother tells



how her son's dream has come true.

"Being his mother, I was very hesitant about him living independently, as I always knew that he was safe in shared accommodation. However, he was not as happy as I thought he was.

My husband and I own a very small, very old, one-bedroom flat. Kirk wanted to try living in the flat by himself. So we sat down with Directions staff and together we made a plan.

When Kirk first moved in to his new home, he and his support worker went for a walk together every evening, discovering new things about the area like restaurants, cafes and local supermarkets.

Without this immense support from Directions, this would have been an enormous task – not to mention he doesn't always listen to his mother.

Now Kirk has totally settled into his flat and living by himself, and he absolutely loves it."