

Second birthday bash was a hit for Dalton



Dalton Adams blows out candles during his 18th birthday party thrown by Burdette Park staff Monday. The park decided to throw Adams a second party after only one person showed for his original party July 1. MACABE BROWN / COURIER & PRESS

Burdette Park staff makes up for only one person showing up for original party

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The last few weeks have been tough for Dalton Adams.

He discovered his grandmother's cancer is terminal and only one friend showed up to his birthday party at Burdette Park last week.

The New Tech Institute student rented a Burdette Park cabin July 1 to celebrate his 18th birthday with co-workers

and friends. After waiting an hour, only one person showed up. Adams — who has Asperger syndrome — took the key back to the office.

"It was tough to do," Adams said. "I went to return the key because I wasn't going to rent a cabin for just me and another person."

Asperger syndrome is a high-functioning condition on the autism spectrum.

Burdette Park administrators were

saddened to hear hardly anyone showed up to the party, so they decided to throw Adams another one and invited the entire park staff.

Zachary Wathen, assistant director of Burdette Park, called Adam's mother Kris a few days later to see if there was something they could do for Dalton.

"I've been 18 and been through a

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time where I didn't have a lot of friends," Wathen said. "It didn't sit well with me or some of the park's staff. If it's one thing that we've got ... it's teenagers and most of the teenagers were really receptive about coming out."

More than 45 Burdette Park life-guards, housekeepers, grounds crewmen, concession workers and administrators came out to support Adams on Monday night. Laughter and pop music filled the room as teenagers played the "Apples to Apples" card game and enjoyed birthday cake.

Housekeeper Mallory Singer, 16, said she wanted to do something as soon as she heard about Adam's dilemma last week. She brought a two-liter, brownie cake, games and utensils. Singer is a student at Mount Vernon High School.

"No one should have an 18th birthday where no one shows up," Singer said. "That is horrible, so I had to make sure people showed up for him the second time around. I think he's really happy. I really hope he remembers this and remembers people are there for him."

Dalton said he never "expected something this big to come out of the situation."

His smile got brighter when he saw more people arriving.

"If they all showed up to this, that means they're probably good people," Adams said. "I appreciate what all they've done for me. I'm absolutely astounded by this. I came here and was like 'Wow, I have this big cabin all to myself.' Then when the time started coming around and everybody showed up, I was shocked."

Kris Adams said Burdette's call to her came around the same time she found out her mother, Trisha Davenport, was out of remission and only had a few more months to live. She said the party is a good thing for Dalton.

"He's very impressed that people would do this for him and it came at a good time when he was sad about his grandmother," she said. "We just lost his grandfather a year ago to pancreatic cancer. Dalton is funny, smart and different, and a lot of people don't know how to take that."

Davenport has been feeling ill lately, but wouldn't miss her grandson's party.

"Dalton said he wanted to have me there and didn't want me to come if I was hurting too bad," she said. "And I came. He's always been a wonderful kid with a lot of health problems. From day one, he's been awfully special to us. Because of his disability, it's been hard for him to make friends or keep them because they move away."



Dalton Adams smiles as he opens gifts during his 18th birthday party that was thrown by Burdette Park staff Monday.

PHOTOS BY MACABE BROWN / COURIER & PRESS

"He's always been a wonderful kid ... From day one, he's been awfully special to us."

Trisha Davenport

Jamie Mitchell, bookkeeper for Burdette Park, wanted Adams to leave Burdette Park with new friends.

"Everyone should feel like they have a friend and for him to feel like he didn't — this was the perfect place for him to land," she said. "Burdette Park is all about family and community. We wanted to invite him into our lives and just show him he's a part of something. We definitely wanted to bring in people his age and have them connect."

Dalton's favorite part about his birthday was having his grandmother there and meeting new people.

"It touches my heart that my grandma showed up because she hasn't been doing well recently," Adams said. "She said she probably wouldn't be able to come but I'm so glad she's here."



Dalton Adams, right, introduces his grandmother to the staff of Burdette Park that threw him an 18th birthday party Monday.