



# LOVE never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance

1 Cor.13:7

Dear Jan Kriel Friend

November 2023



Even before Michael Lapperts' birth, the golden thread of **LOVE** was already visible in his life story. Due to developmental problems, doctors recommended an abortion only four months into the pregnancy. Severe cognitive and physical defects with a life expectancy of a only few days were predicted for this little one.

***"Even if we get him for only two days, we will love him"*** – Marlene, his mother.



Michael was born on October 23, 2006 with serious physical defects, among them a split palate, curvature of the spine (scoliosis), abnormalities of his hands, dislocation of his knees and serious heart defects. Diagnosed with Catel-Manzke syndrome, a very rare genetic defect, he spent the first 6 weeks of his life in the intensive care unit. Family and friends sent out prayer requests and here the second thread of **LOVE** became visible: Strangers started showing up at the hospital to pray with his family for him.

### **And Michael continued to live.**

Marlene quit her job to become Michael's full-time caregiver. His first (of many) heart surgeries was at the young age of 7 months. At 2 years old, he still couldn't crawl or do anything for himself and still looked like a 5-month-old baby. But, just like before his birth, his parents believed that there was a future for this special child of theirs. ***"We will go out and show the world there are different types of bodies."*** With a lot of time, **LOVE** and support Michael tackled each day with new courage



Then the big question came: Where will Michael go to school? Because of his small stature and physical challenges, mainstream school would not work for him. The occupational therapist at Red Cross Children's Hospital recommended Jan Kriel School.

And here Jan Kriel became a piece of **LOVE** in Michael's life-puzzle.

Michael started as a Grade R learner at Jan Kriel School in 2012 (see the photo of his first athletics event standing next to a high school learner!). School was initially a big adjustment. He showed up late for his classes, tired because "my legs are too short". The staff gave him a scooter (one of those little black Shoprite kick bikes!) so he could move more easily.



Also here the puzzle pieces of **LOVE** are visible. Friends like Jerome Gabriëls, Jodi and Ronan Pheiffer have, on numerous occasions, carried Michael on their back when walking got too tiresome for him. To this day they are still great friends.

***"I am glad I came here. I would never have had so many opportunities"***

At Jan Kriel School, Michael was able to express himself through singing and even Latin and ballroom dancing. But after a major back operation, he had to hang up his dancing shoes. But he didn't let it get him down! Last year he took up surfing and recently also participated in the Mr. & Miss. Jan Kriel competition.

Hospitality studies is his most loved subject and with the industrial kitchens at Jan Kriel School he gets a necessary head start to reach his dream of becoming a pastry chef. **Even at only 126cm tall, he lives his life to the fullest.**

***"I am a true believer in Jan Kriel School and the service it provides to it's students and their families. Volgende jaar is hy in matriek, maar ons vat dit nog steeds 'one day at a time'."***

- Marlene

Jan Kriel is part of the Lord's plan with many children. Here, 560 other children, like Michael, are helped through **LOVE** and care. That is why, for the past 30 years, Jan Kriel holds an annual Tree of Lights Festival. Jan Kriel's Liggieboom stands as a sign of hope and witness to a place where **LOVE**, caring and patience shape every child's humanity and character!

Out of gratitude, these lights are turned on at Christmas time every year.

***Therefore, I ask for the sake of every vulnerable child at Jan Kriel, if you would sponsor a light on our Tree of Lights. One light only costs R100, so you can even sponsor a string of 10 or more!***

Thank you in advance for your generosity!



Rev. André van Wyk  
Director: Jan Kriel Institute



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