

Meet Yan:

Yan is an 8th grade student at Oakdale, and he has overcome many challenges in his young life. He was adopted at age 8 from a Russian orphanage, and because he has cerebral palsy, when he was in the orphanage, he was placed in a group with physically and intellectually disabled children and was not given any education whatsoever. He was unable to walk, and dragged himself along the ground. After his adoption, his family was able to get Yan much-needed surgery and physical therapy, and slowly, and with much determination, he learned to walk with support, and eventually, only a walking stick for balance. He also worked hard to catch up educationally. He was thriving in his new family, but he still struggled to fit in at school, and he felt rejected by his peers. His mother says, "I remember going to his school in 5th grade for a field trip. No one was sitting next to him, and I was told he would just sit and dig in the dirt during recess because he couldn't keep up with the other kids. I could tell the kids thought he was weird."



Yan's mother learned about Oakdale Christian Academy and decided to check it out. Yan ended up enrolling, and he has thrived here in so many ways. He is accepted by the other students, and has made extraordinary strides in every area.

His mom reflected in a facebook post on May 4: "This year has been amazing for Yan in so many ways. The last couple years were especially tough, but this year has transformed him ... We just received this photo and others from his amazing teachers at Oakdale. I guess when so many people are cheering for you and believing in you anything can happen. Yan decided to run a mile during field day, and he finished pretty fast. Never would I have thought he could do this, but he did. A true athlete and determined with so many kids and teachers cheering him on. We are so proud of him, and so thankful for all the love surrounding him that is empowering him to believe and fight for more in his life."



In another post, she wrote this: "Thank you for everyone at Oakdale for loving teaching, and caring for Yan ... Oakdale is a top rated Christian boarding school with a beautiful campus in the foothills of the Kentucky mountains with a full size gym and so many fun activities. The classes are very small and individual attention is given to every child, but what makes it so special is the staff. They are available to minister, teach, and help every child reach their potential at all hours of the day. They devote their whole lives to the approximately 60 kids in the school and raise their own children in service. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of them. Yan came home last year with more emotional intelligence, a more mature, aware, and confident teen ... and he wanted to go back to continue to learn and grow in all areas of his life. It has been life transforming for him, and we are at peace and thankful that God directed us to this special place. Thank you Oakdale for becoming our extended family and giving so much to Yan at this time in his life."

It was a beautiful sight when Yan exited his parents' car as he arrived at school this fall ... other boys yelled, "Yan! Hey! How was your summer?" and came up and hugged him and offered to help with his luggage. His mom was beaming. It was obvious the inclusive nature of Oakdale and the welcoming of his fellow students was something that touched her heart deeply.

THIS is why we exist. We help kids who are falling through the cracks or struggling in some way, and we free them to become all they can be, in a loving a nurturing environment. It is a great work, and it is God's work. "He makes all things new "... and we are honored to be a part of that process.

For more pictures on Yans story, check out this YouTube link: <https://goo.gl/qi56UG>

