



# Aidan Glen McGonagle

June 26, 1997 - October 16, 2021

Aidan McGonagle was born on June 26, 1997 in Austin, Texas, and passed away on October 16, 2021 in Round Rock, Texas. Autism and epilepsy made his life more difficult than most.

Aidan was a gift and a blessing to all those who knew him. He was a positive, intelligent, optimistic, and compassionate person who loved being with others and meeting new people.

He loved the outdoors and hiking the trails all around Central Texas. He also enjoyed visiting beaches in Texas and Florida.

He enjoyed history and proudly cast his vote in the 2020 presidential election.

Two organizations were instrumental in his life: Helping Autism through Learning and Outreach (HALO) [[Halo-Soma.org](http://Halo-Soma.org)] and Brookwood in Georgetown (BiG) [[Brookwoodingeorgetown.org](http://Brookwoodingeorgetown.org)].

Soma Mukhopadhyay embodies HALO. She began teaching Aidan at age seven how to use language to communicate. He was nonverbal, but with Soma learned to point to letters on a stencil (letterboard) to communicate his thoughts, both simple and profound. We had no idea how much he understood of the world around him until he began expressing himself using the letterboard in ways we never dreamed possible - "I want to eat in a Mexican restaurant." Restaurant? You know how to spell restaurant?!

Aidan began writing stories and poems and was learning age-appropriate academics for the first time. Miraculously, he was now able to articulate his thoughts and feelings and show his intelligence!

Aidan graduated from Vandegrift High School where he was mainstreamed into many academic classes. He then entered vocational/life skills classes but quickly became bored.

All young people with disabilities “age out” of the public school system by age 22. And those who are unable to pursue higher education or enter the workforce in a traditional job often struggle to find a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.

Aidan wanted to live as independently as possible. So, he chose at age 20 to move into a group home in Georgetown, Texas. He was so happy to now be living with other people with disabilities.

The second life-changing event for Aidan was when he started to work at BiG, a God-centered vocational program and community for adults with special needs: the Citizens of BiG.

BiG provides an entrepreneurial environment that creates meaningful work, builds a sense of belonging, and validates dignity and respect. All the BiG Citizens create beautiful and delicious products that are sold in BiG’s gift shop and cafe. Aidan took great pride and found meaning and purpose by working with his friends at BiG.

Aidan enjoyed jigsaw puzzles, watching favorite movies, and playing games on his iPad. But most of all, he loved hanging out with friends and family. He also loved his dog, Colin, the best birthday present he ever received. The two of them had a special bond. If Aidan was upset or had a seizure, Colin stayed by his side.

Aidan was a member of St. John’s United Methodist Church in Austin. He is survived by his mother and stepfather, Sara and Chris Cotter; father and stepmother, Brian and Teresa McGonagle; siblings Claire McGonagle, Grayson DeChant, Andrew Cotter, Sean & Kaitlyn Cotter; Ashlyn DeChant, Nick DeChant; grandmother Betty Groepper; uncles and aunts Bruce McGonagle and Tia Sea, Ron and Brenda Rusk, Karin Groepper, Nancy and Eric Bostrom, and Stephanie and Mark Cotter.

And Aidan’s “second family,” Patricia and Francis “Sanch” Sanchez; and sons Jay, Al, Jed and Lam; and many more relatives and friends.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Beth and Jerry Rusk, Doris McGonagle, and Rod McGonagle.

Many people who worked with Aidan as a therapist, aide, caregiver or job coach, have told his family that they grew themselves through their relationship with him. We can be comforted by the fact that he’s now freed from all limitations and is talking and laughing with his grandparents in Heaven.

In remembrance of Aidan's life, the family requests that contributions be made to Brookwood in Georgetown, in lieu of flowers.

A live stream of Aidan's Celebration of Life will be hosted by St. John's United Methodist Church through Facebook. Please join using the following link: <https://fb.me/e/Z5ukBzwM>. A Facebook account is not required in order to watch. If a pop-up window appears asking you to log in click "not now" and the live stream will be available for you to watch. If the "not now" button does not appear, scroll down on the page and it will come up for you to select.

**\*\*The family requests attendees of the Celebration of Life either have a negative Covid test within 72 hours of the service or wear a mask.\*\***

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

NOV **12**. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Anderson Terrace  
11505 Anderson Mill Rd.  
Austin, TX 78750

# Tribute Wall



“ *Aidan Glen McGonagle*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM



“ *I never knew Aiden. But as a Mom of another BiG citizen my compassion and heartfelt sympathy goes out to your family. I am so sorry for your loss. Chelsea wanted me to convey to you that “she misses Aiden and he was a good friend to her and that he loved popcorn!”*

*Jill Weiland  
(Chelsea Weiland’s mom from Light)*

jill - November 13, 2021 at 06:14 PM



“ *Aidan was a good friend to our son. He was a very kind and friendly young man. They were lucky to attend a school system where they were valued and respected. Friendships to our boys did not come easily, except when there’s a mutual understanding and openness which Aidan bestowed on many classmates. We miss your smile and warmth, Aidan. While we have moved away from Austin, we cherish our memories of pool get togethers, birthday celebrations and boat parties on Lake Travis. Holding Sara and the entire family in our hearts. May love, light and strength guide you.*



*Love, The Rhea family -Lynne, Todd, Andrew and girls*

Lynne Rhea - November 12, 2021 at 02:48 PM



“ *Aidan was incredibly bright and kind. Our team at VHS was so lucky to have met someone like him. My condolences to his family. Keeping you in my thoughts.*

*-Amber*

Amber - November 12, 2021 at 12:18 PM

HA

“ *Our condolences towards Aiden’s family.*

*Regards,*

*Halo*

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**halo** - November 12, 2021 at 11:10 AM

NK

“ *Aidan had a kind heart and was a joy to be around. I learned so much from him as I was his teacher at Vandegrift HS. He made me laugh daily and definitely kept us all on our toes. I am so thankful I met Aidan.*

*My heartfelt condolences to you Sara. You are a wonderful mother and you worked tirelessly to give Aidan the the best life. I am glad we kept in touch and was so pleased to hear how well Aidan was doing at BIG, living in the group home, and enjoying doing arts and crafts. I only wish I would have visited him after we spoke.*

*Wishing the family Strength and Healing. xoxo*

*-Nicci Kriesel*

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**Nicci Kriesel** - November 11, 2021 at 10:39 PM

NI

“ *2 files added to the album Aidan*



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**Nicci** - November 11, 2021 at 10:14 PM

MY

“ *When I think of Aidan I see his bright brown eyes that just shone so vividly and sparkled with personality even when he was just a young child, when I knew him most. I know he brought such joy and love to so many and will be so dearly missed. My heart goes out to his family and the circle of friends in his life.*

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**Mark Youman** - November 11, 2021 at 10:18 AM

AH

“ 11 files added to the album *Memories Album*



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**Amy Hammons** - November 10, 2021 at 08:21 PM

“ Aidan

*Our hearts are broken  
Ripped by our loss of your Being  
You, in our home, your home, One  
Of the Boys, with families, friends,  
Grandma, uncles cousins, Aunties, nearby  
And afar, sharing food, laughing, talking,  
Smiling, gently, head, bowed  
Listening to music, solving puzzles,  
Hands tinkling with the radio in our old grey Ford  
Traversing Austin, rummaging Half Price Books  
Walmart, Airport lounges, festivals, markets, parks  
Long walks, rippling water under old wooden bridge  
Wind in hair, Camaro, through quiet country road,  
Cabella, Congress Capitol, Cars  
Slow Metro buses, fast metro trains,  
Busy Basketball courts, empty soccer fields; Silence  
Handsome face in mirror, quick whisk through hair  
Celebration, birthdays,  
From fresh face elementary to phenomenal 24 year Old  
Letter board, revealing the thoughts of a person  
Searching through life, highly intelligent, caring, authentic  
Analytic, gentle, good communicator, thoughtful, finding you  
Who we love so much  
You love us so much  
Our pain to be eased, only  
By Beautiful memories  
Of your gentle soul.  
God's Gift to Us  
Through Sara and Brian  
Your Brothers  
Jay Junior, Al, Jed, and LAM  
Patricia and Francis Sanchez*

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**Patricia Sanchez** - November 10, 2021 at 06:07 AM

BM

“ Aidan was kind, funny, and fun. He was intelligent and sweet. My daughter Faye and I enjoyed spending time with him and Sara....playing Uno and going for walks...sharing snacks and hanging out. Faye looked up to Aidan and wanted to sit next to him and hold his letter board for him. We stopped in to see Aidan at his new house. He was very happy to be there and liked his roommates a lot. Sara worked so hard find the new house-one that was just right. She always thought of and fought for Aidan in every way possible. She worked tirelessly to make sure he was as safe, happy, and healthy as could be. Aidan was a special person and my family was blessed to know him.

Brynn St. Martin - November 09, 2021 at 10:11 PM

SC

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Sara Cotter - November 09, 2021 at 06:10 PM

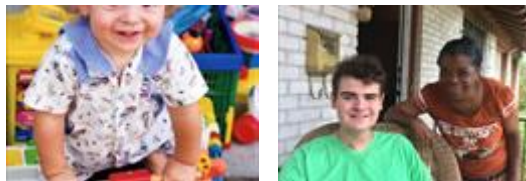


“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

November 09, 2021 at 05:52 PM

SC

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Sara Cotter - November 09, 2021 at 05:49 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Aidan Glen McGonagle.



November 09, 2021 at 03:30 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Aidan Glen McGonagle.



November 09, 2021 at 12:11 PM

DA

“ 36 files added to the tribute wall



Dad - November 06, 2021 at 11:06 AM

LH

“ Aidan was always smiling. Every memory I have of him he is happy. We can all learn something from this wonderful young man ... to enjoy life to fullest and focus on the good in life.

*Aidan meant so much to my son, Mitch. Aidan encouraged him when he was down and out. They shared a hard life of autism and epilepsy together. Aidan's thoughtful words would cheer him up. What a caring person he was. We will miss Aidan terribly.*

*I am also mourning for Sara, what a wonderful mother she is. Patience, Kindness, dedication and LOVE - were the ingredients that gave Aidan that wonderful disposition in life. May the Lord be with you and your families as you deal with this tragic loss.*



Lisa Helt - November 01, 2021 at 01:00 PM

MH

“ Love my good friend Aidan. Finding good friends is very hard. I could really feel his kind soul. Not giving up when really hard life gave me hope for my life. We are so much alike. He made me very happy. I'm glad he's happy now already in heaven. But I will miss him.



Mitch Helt - November 01, 2021 at 12:46 PM

SJ

“ I met Aidan back in 1999 when I was a sophomore at the University of Texas studying special education. My friend (also named Sarah) told me that there was a child in her Mom's preschool class who appeared to have autism. From the moment we met I loved that little boy! Agreeing with my friend, I talked to Aiden's Mom Sara and said that I saw similarities between Aidan and other children with autism that I'd met working at a camp for children with disabilities.



Aidan has always had a very special place on my heart. He was the first child with autism that I worked with, and we learned so much together and had so much fun. Even as a young child I could see the light in his eyes and knew that he understood everything that was going on around him, even though he wasn't able to communicate with words at the time. Aidan had his own ways of communicating, but my favorite was his beautiful smile and big brown eyes that lit up the room. May his memory be a blessing.

sarah Johnson - October 31, 2021 at 04:27 AM

BM

“ 22 files added to the album Memories Album



Bruce McGonagle - October 25, 2021 at 01:12 PM

TT

“ When I met Aidan he was only 5 and his smile and his unique way of communicating made it so easy to like him as much as my own son. He was super smart in solving puzzles, continuously learning and discovering his own interests. Maybe something that not everybody immediately realized when they just met him.

He was blessed with incredibly dedicated parents and supportive and loving friends.

May you Rest In Peace and only dream of all the wonderful memories that brought out your beautiful smile.

Wishing Brian, Sara and Claire strength and healing in this incredibly sad time!

Teo

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Teo Topcubasi - October 24, 2021 at 11:51 AM

SC

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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Sara Cotter - October 23, 2021 at 08:09 PM

SC

*Papaw and Aidan*

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Sara Cotter - October 23, 2021 at 08:10 PM

SC

“ 8 files added to the album Memories Album



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Sara Cotter - October 23, 2021 at 06:40 PM

SB

“ I never had a chance to meet this fine young man, but have worked with his mother, Sara, for many years. Sara is a very special person and a wonderful colleague. I know that if her son was anything like her, he sure was a gift to this world. May Aidan rest in peace and know that he was very loved by his family and all who knew him.

XOXO,

Stephanie

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**Stephanie Bowman** - October 23, 2021 at 04:30 PM

BM

“ 1 file added to the album Aidan



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**Brian McGonagle** - October 23, 2021 at 11:01 AM

SC

Aidan's artwork 2019.

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**Sara Cotter** - October 23, 2021 at 06:22 PM

SC

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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**Sara Cotter** - October 22, 2021 at 03:56 PM



“ Aiden came into my life in 2014 when I became his before and after school caregiver. He introduced me to a whole new world, he was amazing ☐. Aiden always had a smile on his face, even more so when bacon was on the menu. Can't believe he is no longer with us but I'm sure he's somewhere snuggling with Colin and flying free. Rest In Peace sweet Aidan xx.

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**Geane Poole** - October 22, 2021 at 02:38 PM



“ I've never met Aidan, but reading about him and hearing about him, I can tell how special he was and will be kept alive in the memories of all those he touched. Reading about the moment he was able to fully communicate and the astonishment of knowing he can spell 'restaurant' gave me chills.

Debby Ciccone - October 22, 2021 at 02:06 PM

DA

“ I met Aidan and started caring for him at age 8. I was lucky enough to spend 6 years with this amazing family! He taught me patience and kindness and curiosity and how to laugh and connect through souls . He loved to fly down the giant hill on his scooter screaming with joy! I'm sure part of that joy was me freaking out holding my breath until he reached the bottom safely. Then up we go to do it all over again. We spent lots of time jumping on the trampoline singing together. He also loved pasta and cookies, he would put them on the counter and wait patiently with a big beautiful silly smirk. One of my favorite memories of Aidan was on a beach vacation in Texas. Brian told me he would just want to wade by the edge of the ocean.... Wrong.. he ran into the ocean (stayed in for hours) and I had to run in with him.. fully clothed laughing all the way! I learned about halo and rpm therapy as I watched him learn and communicate his brilliant thoughts and deep emotions. He was magic and will live in my heart and thoughts forever. I know he will continue to teach and guide those of us who are lucky enough to be connected to his spirit. To all of his family and friends, my heart is broken for your loss. For Aidan's soaring soul, my heart glows for his freedom 🧡🙏



Dayna - October 22, 2021 at 11:42 AM

MC

“ 4 files added to the album Aidan



Mitzi Chafetz - October 21, 2021 at 09:14 PM