



84th Annual Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting

December 2, 2015

West Steps of the California State Capitol

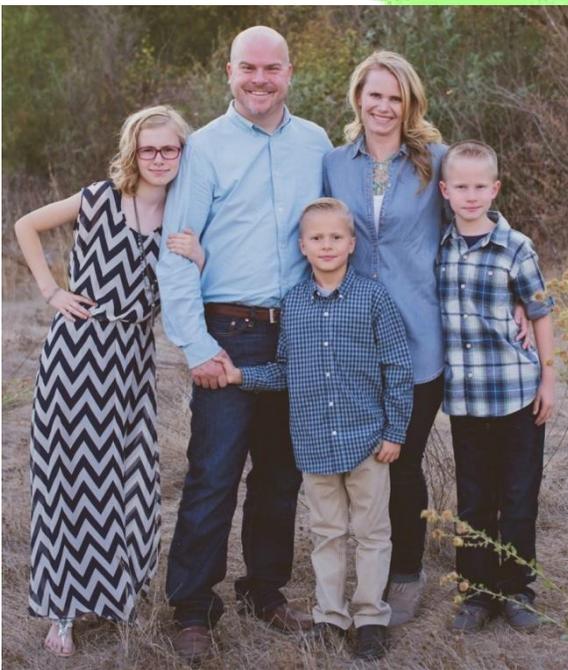
The Department of Developmental Services congratulates **Jeffrey James "J.J." Paris (Age 9)** of Sonora, CA, who has been selected by Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) to help the Governor and First Lady light the tree at this year's Annual Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. J.J. represents over 290,000 persons with developmental disabilities who receive services and supports from the State developmental centers and twenty-one nonprofit regional centers.

J.J. was born in Modesto, CA, to parents Jeff and Maren. As his older sister (Sonny) had already been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), his parents kept an eye out for potential red flags and referred J.J. to VMRC at the age of two for evaluation and assessment. J.J. went on to be formally diagnosed with ASD and received Early Start services from a local behavioral intervention program. Following a great deal of hard work by both J.J. and his loving family, J.J. now attends school in a general education classroom where he is excelling both academically and socially.

In 2015, J.J. was also diagnosed with Tourette syndrome, a neurologic condition causing both motor and vocal tics. Like any other challenge, J.J. handles Tourette's with tenacity and a sense of humor.



Jeffrey James "J.J." Paris Age 9



Paris family: Left to Right - Sonny (sister, age 13), Jeff (father), Austin (brother, age 7), Maren (mother), J.J. (tree lighter)

J.J. now participates in a number of after school activities, including Kung Fu, golf, and Cub Scouts. J.J. has also followed in his big sister's footsteps and recently joined 4-H and is looking forward to showing a goat at the Mother Lode Fair later this year. He has also joined his school band and is currently learning to play the clarinet.

In addition to all his extracurricular activities, J.J. loves playing with his younger brother Austin, kayaking and camping with his family, and playing video games.

J.J.'s father, Jeff, is a financial advisor with Wells Fargo Advisors and a Boy Scout Leader. His mother, Maren, is a past president of the Board of Directors of Valley Mountain Regional Center; a gubernatorial appointee to the 29th District Agricultural Association, Mother Lode Fair Board of Directors; a volunteer master gardener for the University of California Cooperative Extension, Tuolumne County Master Gardeners and a countywide gardening project leader at the Tuolumne County 4-H. J.J. will be accompanied to this year's tree lighting by his grandparents, parents; sister, Sonny and younger brother, Austin.