John's story

John Penney has a special gift for remembering dates.

“I can tell you all the presidents of the United States, when they were born, when they died,” says John. “I know all of the vice-presidents, too!”

As you might expect, he’s pretty good at Trivial Pursuit – especially history-related questions. While history isn’t always challenging for John, other things can be.

Born in 1967, John was diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP) when he was about 18 months old.

“First thing I noticed he wasn’t using his left hand,” says his mother, Miriam. “If he wanted a toy…he’d use his right hand.”
Miriam says doctors believed there was an interruption in blood supply to John early in her pregnancy. Around the time of his CP diagnosis, he experienced his first epileptic seizure – something he still deals with several times a month.

Spa days

Leo Bishop may not be able to communicate with words, but his parents have no difficulty understanding their son, who turns 3 in August.

“He can tell us things just by the way he cries, the way he squeals, the way he laughs, the way he smiles,” says his mother, Jeanine Bishop.

That’s how they know Leo enjoys a new type of wellness program he started this past February. Once a week, the family visits Raintree to use that facility’s small spa tub. Ben Bishop climbs into the pool, and Jeanine hands Leo to his father.

Provider expands services in Richland Co.

(Editor’s Note: The following is part of a series of stories about the provider partners that work with Richland Newhope who offer services for people with developmental disabilities in Richland County.)

One of the newest providers of services in Richland County is Statewide Transportation LLC. Founded in 2015 in Ashland County, the company now serves about 29 people in Ashland, Wayne, Holmes, and, as of May 1, Richland County.

“We started initially doing non-medical transportation and HPC (Homemaker Personal Care) transportation,” says Co-Owner Heather Gentle. “There’s such a need with a lot of things, and I guess with my background we decided to…add services.”

Gentle, who previously served for 13 years as a pediatric home health care nurse,
says her company is now certified to provide a number of different services, including vocational and adult day habilitation. However, its current focus is transportation, providing in-home services to some clients a few hours a week and, as of May 1, managing a home on Sackman St. in Mansfield where two ladies receive 24/7 services.

Comic author's future plans

Daniel Luster says he enjoys reading comic books. He finds them interesting, especially the storyline.

He also loves to draw, which inspired him to publish his own comic book with the help of local artist Lou Graziani. It's entitled "Trina & Aphra's Amazing Adventures."

"I like the characters that have superpowers: telepathy, clairvoyance, people who fly, and another power is invulnerability," explains Daniel.

He says publishing his first book made him feel important.

"I felt liberated and invigorated," he notes. "It was quite an accomplishment."

After traveling to Columbus in March to sell his comic book at SPACE Com, a comic book convention, Daniel was the May featured artist during First Friday activities at Element of Art Studio/Gallery, 96 N. Main St. in downtown Mansfield. To date, he has sold more than two dozen copies.

A book signing at Main Street Books is expected later this summer as well.

Daniel doesn't plan to be a one-time author. He says he's eager to start on his next
comic book. His goal is to make it "more interesting and phenomenal."

"I look forward to more collaboration with Lou," says Daniel.

He's also very appreciative of not only Lou but also Element of Art and its Art Coordinator Kathy Goodwin for giving him the opportunity to make his first comic book a reality.

Daniel's books sell for $3 at Element of Art.

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Party time
Austin Wells (center) was joined by several friends as he celebrated his graduation from Clear Fork High School. This photo was taken in front of the vinyl from a billboard that Austin appeared on in 2014 to mark Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Congratulations, Austin, on your graduation milestone!