

The Lovelight Stories[®]

PODCAST

Ep: 30 | How Meeting My Friend With Down syndrome Changed the Trajectory of My Life with Jackson Hughens | Filmmaker, "Stories Made With Love" | SHOW TRANSCRIPT

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00:01.48

Stephanie Jacobs

Jackson, welcome to the love light stories podcast. It's so great to have you on the show today.

00:08.68

Jackson Hughens

Yes, beautiful morning, Stephanie.

00:11.13

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes. Yes.

00:11.49

Jackson Hughens

So grateful to be here on the show.

00:14.22

Stephanie Jacobs

So we actually got connected through your YouTube. I believe it was, um, okay, hold on. How did we mean it's like been so through, well, we'll edit this out, but your dad connected.

00:28.37

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, how'd you find our project?

00:30.93

Stephanie Jacobs

I'm trying to remember. Oh my gosh. How was it? Oh, I got connected by you were working with someone that was helping you. Well, anyway, I'll just say one of our followers connected because that's essentially what it was. so

00:53.33

Stephanie Jacobs

So we first met and got connected. I think it was one of our followers that connected us and said, Hey, you need to meet David, your dad and Jackson. They're doing amazing things. They're working on a film called made with love. And we got first connected through that. And then we found out later that you were traveling around the country producing stories made with love.

01:16.03

Stephanie Jacobs

a mini documentary series. So that's how we got connected. um Help us understand what you're doing with that video series to begin with. How about that?

01:27.14

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, so ah we originally got started when ah we met a young man with Down syndrome through a family friend who adopted him. I can get more into that story because that's changed our life. That's why we're doing what we're doing. But originally we were making social media content, talking about his story.

01:44.04

Jackson Hughens

um and telling people about the movie we were trying to crowdfund ah with him. And we got all this feedback on social media, all these really long comments of people relating a story of somebody that they love who has Down Syndrome. And so when they saw our friend Jay, it made them just want to share about somebody who's touched their life. And we thought, wow, these we're getting all these Facebook comments. We were screenshotting them and just my dad was getting emotional reading them to me.

02:13.03

Jackson Hughens

And we thought this deserves more than just being a comment somewhere lost on the internet. What if we We're like travel around the country and film all these so stories and make it into like a mini documentary series and just post it on YouTube. And that was kind of a a wild dream that we had ah for about a year before we actually started doing it. And we were, like I said, we were really pushing trying to crowdfund the movie. We were trying to pitch it to Angel Studios. We were trying different models of of marketing online. And we thought, well, how could we

02:48.09

Jackson Hughens

tell these stories and do this many documentary series while we're trying to promote the movie, eventually we realize that, well, this is actually the perfect way to share about the movie and Jay's story that's impacted us. It's like a grassroots, just like or organic, authentic way. We don't have to put ad money behind it or anything. It's just, we're trusting that the heart is felt behind it and that that is gonna reach a lot of people. So we started,

03:17.51

Jackson Hughens

I think in last spring, we just said, all right, let's just start. let's ah we We live in the southeast. We just started traveling around to people in North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama.

03:31.92

Jackson Hughens

And just as we would meet people, we didn't have some master plan. We just, somebody would say, hey, why don't you come tell our story? It started with a young lady who builds birdhouses and the proceeds from those she gives to different nonprofits. And her name is Lindsay. And we told her story first and we're like, wow, this was really rewarding to us to make this. And we might not know the the marketing strategy behind it. But we're just going to keep telling these. And so that's led us to to now I guess it's been about half a year of doing these. And we're hoping to continue telling these stories as as long as we can.

04:13.63

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes, I love that. I think it's so incredible how you've been able to go with the flow and go where these opportunities are leading you. And by the way, you came up and visited Minnesota and we did a video with my brother Jesse who has Down syndrome, um which it was really, really special for me even personally, because I've always wanted to better find a way how we can share the love that Jesse brings in the light. And um I think it was Such a great opportunity to do that.

04:43.98

Stephanie Jacobs

We are still let's see I think that move his mini documentary was probably first posted and shared in August was that perhaps and It's now at the time of this recording.

04:52.93

Jackson Hughens

Yeah.

04:55.50

Stephanie Jacobs

It's now November and we are still getting daily likes and follows and comments and um Like you said just trying to use an organic authentic way to reach the hearts of others I think there's nothing better like you guys have done ah Such an incredible job with these videos and Jackson I know you're the one behind editing and all of it and you've done such a great job doing that and you really can see how it's touching people's hearts even just I mean I've actually screenshotted so many comments on Jesse yo

05:28.00

Jackson Hughens

Mm.

05:29.24

Stephanie Jacobs

and just you know how how these 30 second minute long video snips even on Instagram are really touching people's hearts. So I love it so much and there's no one better equipped to I feel like because you have such a great like personality and so much energy and love that you exude when you're with people. um Jesse fell like became fast friends with you so quickly um So anyway, that was wonderful But let's jump back to the made with love movie because that's where it started and we kind of skipped ahead there but really talking about um The story of how you met Jay and how your dad Jay and really how he changed your life Share a little bit about that

06:12.39

Jackson Hughens

right

06:17.77

Jackson Hughens

Absolutely. So I grew up in, in North Carolina. And there's not really a big film industry here, but there was a at the time when I was graduating high school, the film industry was really growing in in Atlanta. And I knew that I wanted to move there. So as I was in my later half of high school, my dad took me on some trips down to Atlanta to see what it was like living there and think about how this could be a part of my future.

06:45.72

Jackson Hughens

On those trips, we stayed with a good family friend, ah a lady that my dad was friends with in middle school. And now she has this big family. And her daughter, ah who's a little bit older than me, had met this young man with Down syndrome at PE one day. And her high school found out that his family dynamic at home was kind of shifting. And he needed a new family. And so they took him in.

07:14.78

Jackson Hughens

And ah so anyway, like I said, I'm here in high school. I'm going down to pursue filmmaking and we're staying with this family friend. I walk in the front door and there's this young guy with Down syndrome there.

07:26.18

Jackson Hughens

And up until that point in my life, my experience with people with Down syndrome or other disabilities is that they're in the corner of the cafeteria at high school, ah kind of segregated from everybody.

07:32.35

Stephanie Jacobs

Mm hmm.

07:38.06

Jackson Hughens

um So now Jay was all up in my space he was like hugging me he was inviting me to color disney princesses he was he does amazing foot rubs like he's he's all about health and hygiene he does hair he does foot rubs um and he has an incredible skin routine with his face but at the time for me that was like very overwhelming and i was kind of Kind of like the character in the in the script that my dad ended up writing, this sort of jaded guy whose heart was very hard to all this love.

08:11.46

Jackson Hughens

And you got to keep in mind, in high school, guys don't give each other foot rubs. They don't hug each other. They don't tell them that they love them. But really, that's what my heart needed.

08:19.16

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

08:20.68

Jackson Hughens

My heart needed that on kind of unconditional love. And so as we as I moved down to Atlanta, as a my dad ended up moving down to Atlanta a couple years later, Jay got to know us more.

08:24.52

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

08:31.62

Jackson Hughens

and we would color Disney princesses with him and my heart was growing to to open up to Jay and not be so closed off towards him and not not knowing how to interact and and just realizing that he is human just like me and we're just like brothers and yes he may have ah an extra chromosome but that doesn't mean anything in terms of our worth and value or that we can't connect.

08:42.90

Stephanie Jacobs

you know

08:55.95

Jackson Hughens

I learned he had a great sense of humor and so we're connecting together we're having these deep conversations and he realizes we moved here for filmmaking and he tells us for the first time that his dream is to be a movie star and that all throughout his childhood when he was raised by his grandmother she told him to shine his light and that was his purpose in life is to shine his light and he took that to mean that he needs to be a movie star.

09:23.07

Jackson Hughens

and shine that light out to the world. And we saw that Jay and his local community was impacting so many people and he was just such a presence. We could tell he has star potential and he's just great at sharing.

09:34.77

Jackson Hughens

love with people. So my dad, he told my dad, hey, write a script about me. And my dad was like, well, that might take some time. Writing takes time. He said, no, just wake up tomorrow. Think about me and write.

09:46.31

Jackson Hughens

And my dad took that seriously. And he wrote a fictional narrative screenplay ah with one of the main characters being basically Jay.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

09:56.52

Jackson Hughens

I mean, it's and and I read the script and he wrote it in in two weeks.

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Stephanie Jacobs

wow

10:00.82

Jackson Hughens

And I had read other screenplays that my dad had written and took him much longer to write. But when I read this one, something about, I was like, this is this captures Jay's essence.

10:05.70

Stephanie Jacobs

Wow.

10:09.65

Jackson Hughens

Like people, this will be able to break down barriers just like how it took me years to get to to get my heart softened towards Jay. This could have the chance of in a 90 minute viewing experience, show introduce people to Jay who've never met somebody with Down Syndrome and just see his light.

10:25.61

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes. Yes.

10:27.30

Jackson Hughens

So when I read it, I was like, this needs to be made and I'm going to do whatever I can to help get this movie funded and produced.

10:36.29

Stephanie Jacobs

I love too how you had the chance to essentially live with him right for a while and I didn't realize that about your story and I suppose having that experience one-on-one living together helped inform that story script too because it's really is something to be able to like I grew up with my brother Jesse and and when you spend so much time around someone who has Down syndrome they really change your heart like you said like he opened you up and helped you see the world in a different way and you know how did you you shared a little bit about how he opened you up is there anything else like how he actually helped you see the world or people with Down syndrome differently that um you wouldn't have had otherwise um because of your friendship

11:25.83

Jackson Hughens

Oh, yeah. I mean, he's, well, like I said, that unconditional love, he's like changed my perspective on what really matters in life.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

11:35.62

Jackson Hughens

um We were filming, like I said, we we wrote, my dad wrote the script and I said, how can I help get this made? So immediately we started a ah crowdfunding campaign um and I was making all of the the social media content to drive people to our website. And one of the ah first promos we made, we just set up a camera and interviewed Jay. And he talked about how he just, he said, Jackson, he's like, if a car was coming at you on the road, I would let, I would step and and push you out of the way. And I could tell that he meant that he wasn't just trying to you know flatter me or anything. He really meant that.

12:16.69

Jackson Hughens

And me editing that promo and having to watch that clip over and over and over again, it really touched me on a deep level. And it made me start to realize what's really important in life and that while Jay, while to me at the time when I was in high school, I might have thought it was immature or or foolish to to color Disney princesses when you're older than 18 years old, I started to realize what's what's really important and and maybe kind of what the world sees as as foolish is actually ah wise. and

12:54.52

Jackson Hughens

And it's kind of like flipped backwards from what I had grown up seeing. you know In high school, like I said, everybody's trying to be cool. You're trying to seem smart or funny, but it's all to gain the validation of others.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

13:10.36

Jackson Hughens

But with Jay, the moment I walked in his house, I had his acceptance and validation.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Hmm.

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Jackson Hughens

He made that very clear to me. And that that was so foreign that I didn't have to do anything to earn that. But that's why it was kind of it took me a while to

13:21.35

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

13:24.12

Jackson Hughens

come to it because I was like, what is the there's got to be some sort of catch here, because that's how it is in the real world that you've got to do something to earn that from somebody.

13:27.24

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes, yes. Right.

13:32.99

Jackson Hughens

And I've seen that with time and time again, yeah I don't want to make any sort of generalization, but just out of every story that we filmed with somebody to Down syndrome, I keep seeing that of ah what's truly important.

13:44.00

Stephanie Jacobs

Mhmm.

13:46.93

Jackson Hughens

Jesse, I met him in one day and it's like we were we're fast friends and he's encouraging me, telling me I love you. And he's telling me, like, great job on the camera work.

13:55.26

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

13:59.50

Jackson Hughens

You know, how many how many people in Hollywood a list actors are just giving their all trying to earn the validation of other people and get an Oscar or whatever, when if Jesse was just there on set and told them, hey, you're doing a great job, you know, that would fill their heart, everything they're trying to to strive for.

14:13.73

Stephanie Jacobs

the Right.

14:17.57

Jackson Hughens

it So yeah, i've I've found this again. And again, that it's like, what really matters in life. And it's it's love.

14:25.61

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes.

14:25.94

Jackson Hughens

it's it's not ah It's not intellect or achievement. Now Jay is very smart and he's very ambitious. And I believe he's got a lot to accomplish in the long life ahead of him.

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Jackson Hughens

But he knows that he's valuable now. And if today was his last day, he wouldn't feel like there was unfinished work, that he loved everybody.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

14:52.41

Jackson Hughens

ah in the best way that you could and that's like the most important thing.

14:56.63

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah, I love that so much.

14:57.20

Jackson Hughens

Yeah.

14:58.58

Stephanie Jacobs

I do feel like you said you don't want to paint any generalizations and I share that same sentiment. um And yet at the same time, even just growing up with my brother Jesse, that it's so similar where he's just so authentic and he's unashamedly himself.

15:15.47

Stephanie Jacobs

And he's able to just exude that love and that light and and pull that out of you as well and it's it is so interesting. I just feel like, um not feel, I know there's something just so special that God has made people with Down syndrome and and it is that and ability to be themselves and and be that light.

15:40.97

Stephanie Jacobs

there's there's hardly any other way to say it so it's wonderful and you know i really did see too in you like how comfortable you were with my brother jesse and how you interacted and i mean again it was just like any other person you just you were just there and you were present and and um all that and i think that must be because you had a good amount of time spending with Jay.

16:07.89

Stephanie Jacobs

And it's just really, like you said, it's open, he opened your heart and changed your life.

16:08.56

Jackson Hughens

Right.

16:14.22

Stephanie Jacobs

And um there's just i in my eyes, there's no better person to be going around and and your dad as well, you and your dad to be doing these mini documentary stories because you understand the

ah purpose behind it and like how wonderful people at Down syndrome are and you're able to bring that positivity and light and and I just think it's so wonderful like what you're doing. um So you also when you were visiting us we got into the conversation you started sharing a little bit about how you came to faith and I think that's also a big turning point in your life as as I understand it as you've shared with me. So can you just share a little bit about um

17:02.96

Stephanie Jacobs

where you were before you found faith. um I think you you said you were walking through some anxiety and things like that and just just share your story of coming to faith.

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Jackson Hughens

Yeah, so i like I said, everything I was talking about with learning from Jay, I feel like that all plays a role of it because my worldview was sort of getting broken down of what matters most and and what's important.

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Jackson Hughens

um what ah Good thing I'm right at the beginning of this question. My mom just walked back in.

17:34.55

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah, that's okay.

17:40.46

Jackson Hughens

All right. um Right, so the lead-in is what?

17:48.43

Stephanie Jacobs

um ah Share your story of coming to faith and and you were saying, yeah.

17:51.74

Jackson Hughens

Right.

17:54.62

Stephanie Jacobs

you know

17:56.40

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, so for me, coming to faith was also a gradual process, just like kind of awakening to seeing the value of of everyone through J and learning from J.

18:10.17

Jackson Hughens

um And that definitely was a ah big part of me ah believing in and God and believing in and Jesus's love for us. And you know my whole life was built at that point. As I told you, I moved to Atlanta for filmmaking. It was built around achievement um and worshiping art as the the highest

thing. um And art is great. art can move people and can change people's perspectives or it can just be fun and something we can come around and enjoy together.

18:47.11

Jackson Hughens

But it is it is not ah the highest thing. As I told you, I learned from Jay.

18:53.67

Stephanie Jacobs

Mm-hmm.

18:57.78

Jackson Hughens

As I told you, I learned from Jay and and being around people with Down syndrome, love is the most important thing. So I moved to Atlanta to try to pursue filmmaking. And my dream was to be the best filmmaker of all time.

19:10.57

Stephanie Jacobs

yeah

19:10.61

Jackson Hughens

Uh, I, you know, I kind of had this, um, just this dream of, I wanted to leave a legacy. I thought, okay, well, life is going to end and I don't know what happens at the end of that, but all I can control is that I.

19:25.56

Jackson Hughens

try to build um my legacy up as high as possible um and make the the best films of all time and also kind of get my worth from that as well.

19:29.02

Stephanie Jacobs

Mhm.

19:38.39

Jackson Hughens

I didn't do good in school, so it was like, okay, I can't prove myself through academic achievement, but I can prove that I've got this inherent genius artistic talent. And so everything was built on this idea that I was hopefully some sort of prodigy genius. And any time that I came against roadblocks or that things weren't moving as fast as possible, it was this very, this like crippling anxiety because I my whole worth was built on that.

20:10.13

Jackson Hughens

So it's like if I felt like I wasn't moving along fast enough or I was constantly jealous of other people.

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Stephanie Jacobs

yeah

20:15.37

Jackson Hughens

um And because like I said, I thought my worth came from what I did. But learning from people like Jay, that's not the case. And I started studying screenwriting because I saw that the best filmmakers are master writers and people get much applause for writing a brilliant story.

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Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

20:33.68

Jackson Hughens

And so I realized that some of the best writers they would read ah philosophical texts from the great philosophers and that would prove their intellect because they were familiar with deep philosophical concepts that the vast majority of society couldn't wrap their heads around. So I started reading these philosophical texts. This was around the time of COVID. I was isolated um and I was just reading constantly and I'd never read in school. So this was like my first time reading all these books and it was all about intellect and

21:07.32

Jackson Hughens

talking about becoming enlightened and and just you just have to gain a certain amount of knowledge to rise above the rest of humanity. um and I just realized that all these philosopher guys, they didn't have it figured out.

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Jackson Hughens

They they thought they had it figured out.

21:22.23

Stephanie Jacobs

Mm hmm.

21:24.35

Jackson Hughens

Most of them ah went insane or some sort of crazy story with what happened with their life. And it seemed like they were they were missing a piece. There was some piece that they were missing there.

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Jackson Hughens

And as my dad moved down to Atlanta and during COVID, he I knew he was a ah believer of of Jesus.

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Jackson Hughens

um But that was like the one thing I didn't really connect with him on. I used my role model in many ways, but I didn't really.

21:52.07

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

21:52.14

Jackson Hughens

I just thought, OK, this is his way of dealing with death and the afterlife and you know nothing against him on that. But um I heard this song on the radio while we were driving, moving his stuff down from North Carolina to Atlanta.

22:07.67

Jackson Hughens

And it was it sounded like music that I had grown up listening to pop music. It was just really the production of the track really resonated with me. But it had this part in it that said, yeah, though I walked through the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil for that rod and the staff.

22:26.21

Jackson Hughens

um And I thought this these were just bars. I thought this was just this awesome rap that this guy made up that is like poetry.

22:34.01

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

22:34.10

Jackson Hughens

Little guy knows scripture. And so I started listening to that music. I found out that was actually part of the Bible. And I started researching Jesus and thinking of him as just a, either a made up character or a philosopher, some sort of historical teacher.

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Jackson Hughens

And I compared him against all these other lot philosophers that I looked up to. and was trying to take in their work. And I realized his stuff makes the most sense out of everything else. And his teaching is actually the most noble.

23:00.74

Jackson Hughens

And it's because he had this missing ingredient that all the other guys overlooked, which was just love and just this compassionate, forgiving love for yourself, for humanity, for everybody around you.

23:06.75

Stephanie Jacobs

wow yeah

23:14.74

Jackson Hughens

And I was like, okay, like I can't not get behind that. Like I i have to get behind that. um And I mean, eventually it it led to me just feeling convicted that Jesus is actually real.

23:29.94

Jackson Hughens

He's the the son of God, you know, um and that he's like here with us. um And it's interesting like being around you and Jesse, you know, he says things like, I love you.

23:41.09

Jackson Hughens

He said that to me and he said good job with the camera, but he also said multiple times, Jesus loves us. And it's like he,

23:46.03

Stephanie Jacobs

even Yes.

23:47.33

Jackson Hughens

And Jay has the same aspect about him. And I can tell it's not that he's been religiously brainwashed by people around him. It's that he has this innate sense that like we are all loved. And so that's what changed for me is it was realizing that we are loved. And I went through a lot of anxiety even after ah fully believing in Jesus. But all through those seasons, I just no matter how much I freaked out internally of Am I going to have a meaningful life? Am I going to be able to achieve enough? I just felt this this through line of you're always loved. You're good just the way you are. And so that's kind of my mission now is I just want everybody to just know that everybody is loved. It doesn't matter what your background is. It doesn't matter how you were born, how many chromosomes you have. It's everybody is loved whether you know it or not.

24:43.59

Stephanie Jacobs

I love that so much. It's amazing your testimony and how you described it in that you started out by using your brain essentially to research what made sense to you right in the human flesh and how you came to find that the what made sense in your brain and what felt right in your heart aligned when you found Jesus and then not only that, you experiencing it personally, internally, but then you were experiencing it externally in your relationship with Jay and who he was, who he was sharing himself with you as, who he was as sharing himself with you.

25:25.11

Stephanie Jacobs

And, and um I think that

25:26.06

Jackson Hughens

Right.

25:31.06

Stephanie Jacobs

you're You're saying how you've seen that come through and others that you've shared your relationship with it with Down syndrome and and I would say that that's been my experience too with Jesse and how just this unconditional love, like you said.

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Stephanie Jacobs

and and again and like Jesse, he's and unashamed to say that Jesus loves you. you know that's that's when i When we ask him, what's the one thing you want to share with everyone around the world?

26:00.40

Stephanie Jacobs

He says, Jesus loves you. Jesus loves us.

26:02.63

Jackson Hughens

Right.

26:03.52

Stephanie Jacobs

and I think that's that's so incredible.

26:03.73

Jackson Hughens

Right.

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Stephanie Jacobs

and and I just love that that your interests and desire has aligned from God in this way to be able to be using your talents in such a way to to bring forth His kingdom and and share um all the love that that people with Down syndrome have.

26:23.95

Stephanie Jacobs

And so anyway, I just really wanted to stop and take a moment on that because um I think it's just a beautiful testimony and then the way that you're able to use what God has given you in that new enlightenment and that new foundedness in Him to um do the work that He's called you to do in this season.

26:45.73

Stephanie Jacobs

um And I just applaud you for for for actually following through and and doing that work and continuing to move forward in that. um And it's just incredible. So we've we've talked some about the Made with Love video series. um Can you just share a little bit more about your your travels? Perhaps some of the perspective you've gained or the things you've learned, encouragement you've received from ah those with Down syndrome that you're sharing their stories about or just how your faith has strengthened anything that you've been gleaning to help us better understand um these interactions that you've been having.

27:25.67

Jackson Hughens

Yes. Well, thank you for all the support with these endeavors and me doing the series. I appreciate that. First of all, I just want to thank you for that. And I also applaud you for what you're doing as well.

27:36.13

Jackson Hughens

I think it's really important that you are, when I think about what you're doing, it's like you're introducing people to some, you have guests who have been through some really hard things and you're addressing some really tough subjects, but I feel like you're presenting it in a way

27:44.88

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

27:50.97

Jackson Hughens

um that is accessible to to many people and i that's the goal with this series is that it's like something that ah might be difficult for certain people who've never thought about these subjects before but to just present it in a accessible and beautiful way and I feel like you highlight the the beauty of your guests and even though there's some hard things that we talk about but you show what life is really about and coming through these challenges.

28:20.45

Stephanie Jacobs

yeah

28:21.85

Jackson Hughens

So I appreciate you also you know doing something that um might not be by the world's means a super solid path or this super financially viable thing, but you're doing it because you know that there's a real need for it and that people need to to hear this.

28:31.86

Stephanie Jacobs

you

28:40.17

Jackson Hughens

People's hearts need to to have this hope and see what life is really about.

28:43.00

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

28:44.78

Jackson Hughens

But yeah, I'm really grateful.

28:45.44

Stephanie Jacobs

Thank you so much.

28:47.69

Jackson Hughens

Of course. and And thank you for for taking us up on coming to your family in Minnesota and and filming. That was probably the ah first like furthest trip we made on this series.

29:02.57

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, it was because everything else was just in the southeast.

29:03.31

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

29:06.33

Jackson Hughens

So that was really a moment that was like, okay, we're really doing this.

29:10.21

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

29:10.33

Jackson Hughens

And that was,

29:11.64

Stephanie Jacobs

It was a dream for us. We had so much fun. It was it was just amazing. I'm so glad it worked out.

29:18.43

Jackson Hughens

and And I feel like I learned so much from Jesse. I also learned from you and Sam and your whole family. And that's what I feel grateful for these experiences. I just feel like I'm trying to soak everything up.

29:30.72

Jackson Hughens

I'm trying to, this is like a ah stage of, I could have gone down the route of ah working on film sets and trying to live out in Hollywood and grind up the ladder that way.

29:31.97

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

29:43.11

Jackson Hughens

um But I like to, to think that I get this chance to go this route of like filling my heart with love and lessons from some of the most loving people on this planet.

29:56.34

Jackson Hughens

um So that way, if I do ever make movies that I can, my heart is like in the right place, you know, i've i or I can have people, I can consult with people like you who I've who i've talked with,

30:03.45

Stephanie Jacobs
yeah Yes, yes.

30:10.55

Jackson Hughens

um who are living with somebody with Down syndrome. And it's not just Hollywood trying to cater to a niche audience of going, all right, let's we need to represent the Down syndrome community.

30:21.02

Jackson Hughens

Let's just cast somebody with Down syndrome and then market it to them. It's like the hope is that I'm getting steeped in the love of this incredible community.

30:25.19

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

30:30.69

Jackson Hughens

And just like you, everybody in the community has been so welcoming to me. An outsider, somebody who you know, was not naturally a part of this community, which is beautiful.

30:41.11

Jackson Hughens

And we hope to show through these stories that there's more unlikely friendships, just like me and Jay, um a that this community is is growing.

30:53.50

Jackson Hughens

And this is what society should look like. It shouldn't just be ah one niche audience. Everybody should be a part of the Down syndrome community because people with Down syndrome are just like people without Down syndrome.

30:57.98

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes.

31:04.46

Jackson Hughens

We are all the same. people. And that's what I've learned from so yeah, to to answer your question and talk about some of the things that I've learned. It's I have been around, but let me pull up some of my notes here for that I jotted down.

31:21.58

Jackson Hughens

um But let's see.

31:21.68

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

31:31.49

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, so I just I was just in, ah sorry, I need to blow my nose.

31:37.22

Stephanie Jacobs

yeah you're fine

31:58.93

Jackson Hughens

So I just got a chance to go to Armenia, which was our first out of the country story that we've done.

32:00.27

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah, you're fine.

32:06.41

Jackson Hughens

um And I'd never been to that part of the world. I had no clue what to expect. um And I was just affirmed that we are all the same.

32:17.65

Jackson Hughens

I got to meet people with Down syndrome who don't speak English, but we connected in that same kind of way that I first connected with Jay when I met him. where it's just a big open armed hug.

32:26.56

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

32:30.02

Jackson Hughens

um And you just feel this sense of like, yeah, we don't we can't speak the same language, but we're brothers. were We're actually part of the same family.

32:35.90

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah. Hmm.

32:39.59

Jackson Hughens

And so I got to... feel that firsthand and realize you know part of it is like, oh, this this trip, this video is special than all of our others because we're going to show a different life in Armenia.

32:51.31

Jackson Hughens

And there are different things as in that their society might not be as accepting as the United States of people with disabilities. um But really, I just learned that we are all the same and we all

want the same love and people with Down syndrome ah everywhere all around the world ah exude that unconditional love.

33:17.69

Jackson Hughens

We went over there with other advocates from the United States. um And Sofia Sanchez, she's a actress. ah She lives in California with her family and she was adopted um from Ukraine.

33:33.98

Stephanie Jacobs

oh wow

33:35.48

Jackson Hughens

And so she went over on this trip and, you know, she just connected with all the other people she met with Down syndrome. And you could tell that it was just like family when she met them. um And if you listen to interviews with her, you can clearly tell that she doesn't see her having Down syndrome as something that is makes her different than anybody.

33:59.60

Stephanie Jacobs

Oh wow.

34:01.97

Jackson Hughens

And you you saw that firsthand with everybody that she interacted. And yes, she's achieved a lot as well. Though she's 16 years old, she's been in the Hunger Games. She has a lot that she could boast about and a lot that she could put her worth in.

34:14.56

Jackson Hughens

But you see that her worth doesn't come from that. And one thing I learned was that she was there with a bunch of other ah kids with Down syndrome. uh, in Armenia and she was just obsessed with them.

34:25.76

Jackson Hughens

She was like their biggest fan, this, uh, little boy named Monte. She was like, took him in as a brother and very easily, you know, if this was, if I'm thinking about the mentality that I had a few years ago, I'm, you know, comparing myself to people based on achievement.

34:32.75

Stephanie Jacobs

Oh. Yeah.

34:43.86

Jackson Hughens

you know, I might think, oh okay, I'm better than these people. I've been in movies, I've achieved all this. She doesn't operate like that. She will, there is a group called the Sunny Bells.

34:54.51

Jackson Hughens

It's interesting, in Armenia, they don't, ah they don't use the term Down syndrome. They say the sunny people.

34:59.49

Stephanie Jacobs

oh

35:01.51

Jackson Hughens

um

35:01.98

Stephanie Jacobs

I love that. That's so precious.

35:03.49

Jackson Hughens

Yeah.

35:04.56

Stephanie Jacobs

Oh my gosh.

35:06.29

Jackson Hughens

And so there is this group of adults with Down syndrome who, We're like a bell choir and ah Sophia was just their biggest fan and they were like the biggest supporter of her.

35:18.44

Jackson Hughens

And so I feel like that's what so all of society should be like is we should all be cheering each other on.

35:22.41

Stephanie Jacobs

Yes.

35:24.47

Jackson Hughens

And it's not about how many views you have on your video or on your podcast or how many accolades you've received. It's just, we're all cheering each other on because we know we're all on the same team.

35:35.33

Jackson Hughens

We're all on in the same family. So that's a big thing that I learned. from Armenia. And then after coming back from that, ah we met with a family who doesn't, they don't have any relatives with disabilities or with Down syndrome, but they saw one of our YouTube videos, one of our many documentaries and commented And we we got this comment that said, uh, two months ago

when I watched this video, I immediately left my house and found a center for individuals with disabilities and started volunteering there with my whole family.

36:10.02

Jackson Hughens

And it's changed our lives and it's become a part of our weekly routine and.

36:10.48

Stephanie Jacobs

oh Oh my god.

36:14.96

Jackson Hughens

So I reached out to them, I was like, if this is real, we got to come tell your story. And it was, and I got to interview their family. I got to, and this video is not published yet. It's going to be coming sometime in the next several months.

36:27.50

Jackson Hughens

But an interview with their son, who is 16 years old, which is interesting because that was around the time that I met Jay.

36:32.89

Stephanie Jacobs

Mm-hmm.

36:33.50

Jackson Hughens

And like I said, my heart was so hardened at that time. But their son, who is 16 years old and he, um He got very emotional in his interview, which I did not expect. And he's got a real sweetheart. He's a guy, he's in a band. He plays like...

36:50.87

Jackson Hughens

um like heavy metal music and electric guitar and he's really talented but I kind of to be honest I judged him I prejudged him and I thought okay this guy he's you know he's probably not gonna get emotional in an interview but he said this really great line of how he's felt so much love from people with Down syndrome

36:53.13

Stephanie Jacobs

Wow.

37:05.10

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

37:11.69

Jackson Hughens

just like I felt with Jay originally that unconditional love and how it's inspired him to want to he said that they always when he goes to the center the people with Down syndrome greet him with

a hug and he's like I want to beat them to that hug like I want to show them that unconditional love before they show it to me because they have like improved my life so much so that has been kind of a quote that stuck with me of like okay Jay has really

37:27.82

Stephanie Jacobs

ah Oh wow.

37:40.32

Jackson Hughens

given a lot of his love to me. So I want to to give it back. like I really want to try to beat him. When Jesse says, you're doing a great job there, at whatever it is, I want to beat him to it.

37:51.67

Jackson Hughens

I want to say, no, you're doing a good job, Jesse. I want to say it before he says it to me. So that's really the inspiration. And I hope a lot of people, I hope that's what society can learn from these many documentaries.

38:02.61

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah.

38:02.69

Jackson Hughens

Anybody that watches them who maybe hasn't naturally been a part of the community of people with disabilities and maybe didn't grow up volunteering or doing these things that seem like charitable, uh, or going to night to shine prom dance events that, you know, that wasn't in my history, but to show that you can at any time tap into this love and realize that we're all the same and you can show that love right back.

38:33.11

Stephanie Jacobs

Wow, I love that thank you for sharing that Jackson and I think just I'm so glad that to have you on this podcast because I think people are so blessed by just getting to see touch and understand you and your story because just I'm trying to put this into words but and i've i've I've shared with you before like you are so like outwardly loving and energetic and so natural with your way of words and like working with uh seeing you work with my brother Jesse and all of that and I can really see how you've come to um

39:21.17

Stephanie Jacobs

just share and pour out that love that Jay initially poured into you and it's amazing because he's he's poured this into you and then you're going out and sharing this with the world and like sharing the love of all these other people who have Down syndrome and helping to amplify their voices and their stories and their love.

39:42.23

Stephanie Jacobs

And that is such a huge, huge, huge gift to our society. And it's been a long time since I've come across someone doing something that I feel so connected and behind of like I, I just absolutely love what you're doing.

39:59.57

Stephanie Jacobs

And I think our listeners today are so blessed.

40:00.47

Jackson Hughens

Thank you.

40:03.25

Stephanie Jacobs

to even just get to hear from you personally. one of the The son of the father-son duo behind these stories because um there there really is something special about you personally, Jackson, and and I really do feel like you are on the right path. I feel like you are taking to heart what God is leading you to do and Um, just going out there and doing it and it it's incredible.

40:32.40

Jackson Hughens

Thank you.

40:32.55

Stephanie Jacobs

So anyway, um, if I could put it in any more words, I would, but basically I'm behind everything you're doing. And, um, it's just a huge blessing to be able to have you share your story today on this podcast.

40:45.16

Stephanie Jacobs

Um, I'd like if, you if you can for a minute to talk about a little bit. about the Made With Love movie and um what you're doing with that. And and I know you you shared with me that um you are focusing on these stories but you also have this movie. So just give us a little behind the scenes on that.

41:07.97

Jackson Hughens

Right. So we want this movie to be big because Jay's dream is big. He talks about how he wants his face to be on the big screen. And we know his impact is is going to be massive.

41:20.56

Jackson Hughens

So we want to do it justice. We want to tell this story the right way. um So we want to raise two to three million dollars for the budget.

41:31.28

Stephanie Jacobs

and

41:31.32

Jackson Hughens

And ah That's pretty low budget, actually, compared to a lot of Hollywood films that come out. But we know that with a story that's kind of intimate like this one, it doesn't need a bunch of special effects or anything that's going to make it big.

41:47.21

Jackson Hughens

So we know we can tell it for that. And really, ah some of that money is just built in to try to get some A-list actors alongside Jay.

41:54.87

Stephanie Jacobs

Hmm. Hmm.

41:57.05

Jackson Hughens

In my mind, Jay is A-list level. The world just doesn't know it yet. um but we want those A-list actors are kind of ah a big part of the marketing of any movie ah that helps it get out there. So we're waiting and we're taking our time with raising the budget on this. We first started with some crowdfunding campaigns um and that has raised a portion of the budget, but we're still looking for a lot of that.

42:25.78

Jackson Hughens

and we're trying to figure out what the best way to getting and this film made is and we think that telling these stories is the best thing that we can do with our skills and our materials we have right now ah because it's just me and my dad as the crew and we're just using our own personal camera and equipment. So we can tell these stories and impact a lot of people um while we're trying to get them the movie funded and hopefully on our travels, whether it's on a plane flight or whether it's through one of these videos getting shared online and reaching a bunch of people that maybe somebody will see that we're trying to tell Jay story on the big screen and they might have the means to helping it get made. So we're open to the different ways that this movie could get made, but we're holding out that this film is gonna be done ah in a and a big way.

43:20.53

Stephanie Jacobs

Yeah, and and I think it's so wise to to be going around and doing these micro stories in the meantime or this mini documentary series because you're able to um just share more of the love of the Down syndrome community and organically um stir up interest rather than just like hitting the pavement and trying to raise money um which which can work but i think like perhaps god's purpose is greater than that right and that's what you're going out to do and i know you shared with me too you have a new exciting partnership to help you share these mini documentary series which is just more validation that this is a wonderful path to take and um so is there anything you want to share um for people who

44:05.61

Stephanie Jacobs

want to follow you and watch these series. um How can they find out more about it? Share about that.

44:13.50

Jackson Hughens

Yeah, absolutely. So follow us on Instagram. That's where we we post all of our updates, our um highlights from the many documentaries and you can find out the latest with our journey and what's going on through our Instagram and it's at Made With Love, the movie.

44:31.47

Jackson Hughens

And you'll also find our YouTube channel through the link in our bio on Instagram. And that's where we're posting all of these many documentaries. So I would say if you want to just stay tuned into what our journey is on making the documentaries and ultimately making Jay's movie one day, Instagram's the best place. And if you want to watch our documentaries, so they're all on YouTube.

44:55.75

Stephanie Jacobs

And they are incredible. They've got so many views, um just really, really touching your very talented Jackson and your dad as well. So you have an amazing team, you and your father ah behind all this. So before we close out, I just want to leave people today um with something that you said to me or are actually shared with me. and And I asked you, why do you want to share your story on the Love Light Stories podcast? And your answer was, I want people to know that we can all use our lives to shine light into darkness and leave a meaningful impact on people's lives.

45:32.77

Stephanie Jacobs

And I think that is such a simple, yet one of the most powerful things that we can do in our life. And I just applaud you for highlighting some of the people that are doing it the absolute best in our world, in my opinion. And um I just want to leave that with everyone as a simple parting message and thought to ponder on. How can we all use our lives to shine light into darkness and leave them meaningful?

46:01.34

Stephanie Jacobs

impact on people's lives. And Jackson, I think you're doing your part on that. And I thank you so much for joining me today on this podcast. um It is just an absolute joy and pleasure. And I am behind you 100%. I'd love to continue to support you in any way I can. um and And who knows the sky's the limit. It'll be fun to watch as as all this unfolds.

46:26.31

Jackson Hughens

Thank you. Thank you for all the love and support. We feel it. We're grateful.