The Wheelchair Stunt Master

Aaron Fotheringham wants people to see their daily challenges in a new way. He doesn't believe they are challenges. Instead, he believes they are opportunities to think differently. He feels strongly about this because he was born with spina bifida. Spina bifida is a birth defect in the spine, and it can damage the spinal cord. For Fotheringham, he can't move his legs because of this defect. Throughout his childhood, his adoptive parents urged him to be as independent as possible, even if that meant he had to think of new and creative ways to deal with problems.

In school, Fotheringham refused to take the easier physical education classes. When the other students had to run a mile, he kept up by using crutches. While his friends biked, he would wheel quickly to keep up with them.

He loved the thrill of extreme sports. He realized his wheelchair could be an instrument for fun rather than just a medical device. His older brother began taking him to skate parks where bicycle motocross riders (or BMXers) would ride and do tricks. When Fotheringham first tried to do a trick in his chair, he fell hard. It hurt. But he realized he found something he loved to do—even though it would be difficult to learn.

Fotheringham practiced daring stunts, including wheeling down steep ramps and flipping off of them. After a lot of practice, he perfected a mid-air 180-degree turn. The next year, he landed the first wheelchair backflip. After posting his backflip on the internet, his life changed. Fotheringham's backflip went viral! Since then, he's performed record-breaking stunts all over the world. A lot of people call him by his nickname, "Wheelz."

Beyond performing, Fotheringham also speaks to younger people who are in wheelchairs. He shows them how to use their chairs in different, fun ways. He is also working on creating a wheelchair that is perfect for big stunts. His goal is to inspire people to see their disability as a positive thing. He wants more people to experience the joy he has gotten from learning these daring stunts.

1. What is spina bifida?

a. It's a disease that affects the legs
b. It's a birth defect in the spine.
c. It's a birth defect in the legs

2. What does spina bifida cause in the body?
a. People can't move their legs
b. People can drive a wheelchair faster
c. People can't move their eyes and arms.

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3. What is the purpose of the author?
a. Spina bifida is not a problem
b. All people on wheelchairs start doing tricks and become stunts.
c. Motivate people on wheelchairs to take challenges and to take advantage of the difficulties.

4. One possible suggestion for young people would be
a. Do tricks with wheelchairs
b. Get an expensive and modern wheelchair.
c. Practice makes the master

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