

# NATHHAN / CHASK

CHASK - Christian Homes And Special Kids  
NATHHAN - National Challenged Homeschoolers

**Fall / Winter 2009 - 2010**



Joey Lane - See story on page 59

## **In This Issue:**

**Married -- With Extra "Challenges"** By the Bushnells

**Hands-On Stuff for Special Needs Kids** By Diane Ryckman

**Learning Disabilities and the Visual/Kinesthetic Approach** By Visual Manna

Articles, letters, and reviews printed in the NATHHAN NEWS are not to be taken as legal or medical advice. Please seek the services of a qualified source.

Also please note: What you read and the resources you find through NATHHAN may not line up with your Christian convictions. Some of the resources we share with you may not be necessarily from a home-schooling perspective. We simply point you, with your shovel, and hope you will dig! Please pick and choose carefully.



**Tom and Sherry Bushnell**

## Goal and Purpose of NATHHAN

To encourage homeschooling families with special needs children in ways that glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. To find Christian homes for children with special needs.

## NATHHAN / CHASK

National Challenged Homeschoolers  
Christian Homes And Special Kids

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www.chask.org

## Front Cover

Little Joey Lane was born with his bladder on the outside of his body, plus no working kidneys. His mom contacted CHASK. He was adopted by Chuck and Marilyn Lane in Ohio. Read their story of life with this precious angel, now in heaven with Jesus on page 59.

## Letter From the Editors:

6 months seems like a long time ago. And yet, here it is, magazine time again. Time for sharing about what is happening around our house... and boy, have things been happening!

We started our summer off with a beautiful wedding in Grandview, Texas. Jacob and Renita's ceremony was one of the most beautiful we have ever been to. (Maybe it was because we love the two getting married so very much!) Along with touching vows, and singing "The Rose" and hymns like "Christian Home", they included a unity candle, the parental blessing, and a simple, yet challenging message. We were at once amazed and filled with worship all day.

Right before the wedding day, Renita and her brothers had spent time picking gorgeous blue prairie gentians from the fields around them. They used a touch of real lavender, then some white and the blue to create elegant arrangements that lasted and lasted.

The Idaho contingency (us) cooked a rehearsal dinner of lasagna, green salad, French bread, strawberry delight dessert and lemonade.

Jacob and Renita had a nice long honeymoon in a cabin on the Pacific Ocean. It was perfect weather.



**Jacob and Renita Bushnell**

When they got home in July, we had a big BBQ reception at the local fair grounds. It was several days of smoking and BBQing chicken, making wedding cake, baked beans, cornbread and watermelon. About 150 attended and we felt blessed by all the friends and family that came to wish Jake and Renita well and help us celebrate.

We have enjoyed watching Renita very quickly becoming a full-fledged Idahoan. She is gifted in many ways and we are totally blessed to have her as our daughter-in-law.



As soon as we arrived back home from the wedding in Texas, Josh (23), Zeph (16) and Tom (won't say his age...) started on the 25 ft. by 25 ft. log home they built for resale. Artfully placing logs and careful, hand-crafted notching is Josh's gifting. It is gorgeous. (This is our version of the Bushnell "stimulus" package.) They did a very good job and it sold to a family in Washington state before it was finished. This fall the guys spent 2 weeks in Washington putting it up on a foundation. They were camping... until the weather hit 17 degrees at night and it started snowing!



The rest of us spent our summer gardening, working with the guys on the log house, managing the household and getting ready for winter...

Tom is now entering his 3rd year as a law student. Along with directing NATHHAN / CHASK office, he is starting work for a lawyer in

town several days a week for his apprenticeship. He will be getting firsthand experience in a very busy office. He says he loves building with logs, and between studies and working, he is getting the boys going on the next log home.

Our children elected to do a homeschool co-op, one day a week, instead of music lessons this year. On Tuesdays we are taking Geometry, Biology, Science, Art, PE, Choir, and Creative Writing. In exchange for all the wonderful classes our children are taking, Sherry is teaching Creative Writing class to 15 junior high and 15 high school students. (Tom substitutes for her when she has a birth.) As a Certified Professional Midwife, she is working for an OBGYN two days a week in Libby, Montana, along with a sprinkling of her own clients here in Bonners Ferry.

Although we are busy, we have settled down into a good routine. We are enjoying our canned summer bounty. The garden went crazy with raspberries this year and we have enough fruit spread to last a long time.

At the end of the summer we represented NATHHAN / CHASK and A Blessed Beginning at the local fair. (More on that on page 61.) Over three days, crews of women came in to make 200 apple pies and hundreds of cookies to sell. As it worked out, a church generously shared enough funds to pay for all the pies, brochures, signs, posters, and fetal models, so that we could simply relax and share at all four days of the fair. It was an incredible experience.

Our children have grown closer to the Lord this last summer. We are grateful for His provision of experiences and teaching times to help us all become more like Him.

On the special needs children front:

Sheela, 21 years old and blind, has been our constant household help. She is such a blessing to us. Our lives are definitely more brighter, more organized and cleaner with her help!

Lynny, 17 with cerebral palsy and autism, has stepped up in skills. This summer, with Sheela's prompting, she has learned to clear the table, put away dishes, do some laundry, clean up the living room and generally participate in a much bigger way. She is very excited to be a real helping part of the running of the home. Yes, we do run things through the dishwasher and often things are misplaced. But her heart is so sweet and helpful

that hardly anyone complains. (O.K. the mucky glasses in the cupboard need to be sorted out from the cleaner ones once in a while, but hey... it is a small thing!) This is huge for her, as she has been in the past more prone to just sit and sit and sit. Now she is busy and happily so.

Jordan, 22 with Down syndrome, has also been able to do a whole lot more. He spent the summer learning how to do morning and evening dishes (by himself), and this summer was outside helping a lot with the log home building crew and generally getting pretty sun burnt.



**Jordan, Sheela and Lynny Bushnell**

These last few weeks we are learning new skills too. Our homeschool co-op friends have a Jersey cow they are daily milking. We are getting milk from them and once again our family is drinking good-for-you raw milk, making sour cream, butter, cottage cheese, yogurt and tangy yogurt-cheese. It is great to do this ourselves, as we don't have a good grocery store outlet for raw milk. We skim the cream off for those of us who don't need the fat, and still have the live enzymes and great food benefits too. As a mom and dad, we have made a commitment to eating better (ie: less sugar, more honey) and cooking great tasting meals. A commitment to eating well and exercising is not always easy when we are busy, but we realized that if the children were to learn

good health habits, that we had to be their examples. Right?!

Our life is pretty normal. Amidst broken washing machines and dryers, a freezer that doesn't want to freeze, a garden that didn't get watered very well with our "new" system, and being surprised by an early snow losing our apples... we manage to chug along. God provides.

Our busy lives come to a standstill each Sunday, as we worship our Creator together with other believers in church, or at home as a family. We take the time to visit, play chess or other great games, read stories and just enjoy each other. Sunday breakfast is always a celebration because we want Sunday to be the special day of the week. To our family, "special" means candles, extra yummy food, time to talk and rest, time to communicate about the upcoming week and eating lots of popcorn.

As our family has grown in size and interest, we don't all attend the same church. Our hearts still have the same goal... giving thanks and worshiping our Lord. We often get together for the after-church-Sunday meal and have a good time exchanging sermon notes and news about all the friends and loved ones we both know.

This last year has been a learning experience for us in learning to let go and let the Lord direct our adult children where He has them serving. I hope we are learning to let go graciously and with thankful hearts. I know that those of you with older children will know exactly what we are talking about.

May the Lord bless all of you, as you serve our Precious Lord ministering to your family,

Tom and Sherry Bushnell



**Bushnell Home**

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## History and Information About NATHHAN/CHASK

NATHHAN began with a telephone call from one mother of a child with Down syndrome to another mother homeschooling her son with Down syndrome in the early spring of 1990. Acting on the Lord's prompting to begin a network of parents helping one another, Diane Macbeth in PA wrote Kathy Salars in TX on March 17th, 1990, thus announcing the birth of NATHHAN.

In the fall of 1992, due to NATHHAN's exponential growth from 2 to over 600 families, it became impossible for these moms to keep up. Tom and Sherry Bushnell offered their assistance and NATHHAN's main office was moved to Olalla, Washington. The NATHHAN/CHASK office now operates in Moyie Springs, Idaho.

A board meets periodically to make decisions. Its officers are Jim and Jerri Unruh in Bonners Ferry, ID; Ralph and Debbie Poole, Cheney, WA; John and Diane Ryckman, Creston, BC; Tom and Sherry Bushnell; and Andy and Linda Dillon, Camano Island, WA. Financial Advisory: Dennis and Linda Lamphere, Moyie Springs, ID.

In the Fall of 2002, as an outgrowth of NATHHAN, CHASK was born. CHASK, Christian Homes And Special Kids, matches special kids with families for free, no agency fees or referral costs.

NATHHAN / CHASK's web page and magazine strive to equip and encourage parents with special needs children, assisting them in finding the will of God for their lives.

In the Fall of 2007, CHASK opened A Blessed Beginning, an on-site pregnancy resource center.

### NATHHAN 's Ministry

#### National Challenged Homeschoolers

**NATHHAN NEWS** - This magazine, printed twice a year, includes resources, articles from parents and professionals, and lots of letters from families, plus much more.

#### NATHHAN WEB PAGE [www.nathhan.org](http://www.nathhan.org)

Updated quarterly. A full service web page with all the features of the print style NATHHAN NEWS plus a discussion board, and on-line applications for the lending library and family directory. A password is needed to access the NATHHAN membership portion. Hundreds of articles from the last 16 years of NATHHAN are included.

**FAMILY DIRECTORY** - Although some of us will never meet this side of heaven, we can still encourage and share a bit of our lives with each other. The directory is on-line, password protected, updated once a year and is available to members willing to be in the directory.

**LENDING LIBRARY** - The library is operated through the mail for NATHHAN members. Members donate postage to and from library when they use it. The NATHHAN Lending Library Catalog can be reviewed on the web site [www.nathhan.org](http://www.nathhan.org). Book donations are gladly accepted.

**All this for only \$25.00 / year.  
Unbelievable!**

### CHASK's Ministry

#### Christian Homes And Special Kids

Parents can raise their disabled child with joy and competence. Christ is the answer to making it through any crisis.

Our goal is to *match* every special needs child that God brings to us who needs a home, before-born or already born, with a Christian family. No agency fees.

**[www.chask.org](http://www.chask.org)  
[chaskinfo@aol.com](mailto:chaskinfo@aol.com)**

#### Gift Memberships

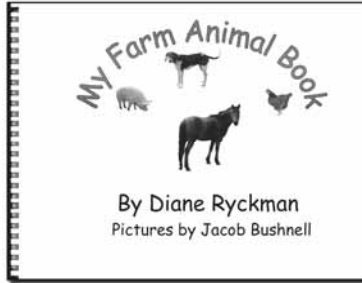
Gift memberships are available for folks facing financial difficulty. A NATHHAN/ CHASK gift membership entitles the family to NATHHAN/ CHASK's internet services. NATHHAN/CHASK's gift program is funded solely by other homes sharing out of their concern and abundance, giving so other Christian brothers and sisters can receive the encouragement they need. We want you to get the support you need. If your home cannot afford the \$25.00, don't hesitate to send us what you can afford and request a gift membership.

# Resource and Advertising Listing

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# If phonics doesn't click, try **Farm Animal Words Reading Kit**

Designed to assist you in teaching sight reading skills, **Farm Animal Words Reading Kit** consists of a book called **My Farm Animal Book**, a double set of flashcards, and an instruction booklet on how to teach sight reading.



## **My Farm Animal Book Features**

- ⇒ 10 well known farm animals.
- ⇒ Large (8 ½" by 11"), uncluttered pages.
- ⇒ One simple animal photograph per page with large, easy to read print.
- ⇒ Total reading vocabulary of 57 words. 4 new words per page.
- ⇒ Repetition and review of words incorporated into text.

**Farm Animal Words Reading Kit** has been developed by Diane Ryckman, and has been thoroughly tested on her son Andrew, who just happens to have Down syndrome.

For more information visit [www.DownHomeLearning.net](http://www.DownHomeLearning.net)

E-mail: [ryckman@downhomelearning.net](mailto:ryckman@downhomelearning.net)

Phone: (250) 428-7798

John and Diane Ryckman  
1453 Evans Rd. RR7  
Creston, B.C.  
V0B-1G7

\$23.00 Includes shipping and handling.



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ASSOCIATION**  
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# Special Needs Support Groups

## Deaf Ministries List

Earl and Shirley Wilbers  
221 W. Gay St.  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
E-mail: EEARL2@aol.com  
Website: Deaf Ministries List  
www.deafministriesconnection.netfirms.com

**Especially Yours** - a support group for families homeschooling children with special needs in Colorado. All are welcome.  
Call Patricia Rendoff.  
(303) 937-3428 or email at prdiggie@juno.com

## Shepherd Boy - Strategies for Autism

4241 Faye Drive  
Olive Branch, MS 38654  
www.shepherdboy.org  
Hands-on, practical ideas for working with individuals with autism and related disabilities.

**HOPES - Homeschooling Our Precious Exceptional Students.** We meet on the first Thursday night of each month.  
For more information contact Jim and Mary Rees,  
Traveler's Rest, SC Phone: (864) 834-0264

## Bethel Baptist Academy

P.O. Box 10035  
Fullerton, CA 92838  
Norm and Sharon Wallace (714) 527-5807 or Matthew and Julia Hoch (714) 990-0199. We help Moms write their IEPs through our workshops. Our resource specialist is Marian Soderholm. She can be found at (562) 425-7886 or e-mail at mercedchristian@yahoo.com

## Almaden Valley Christian School & AVCS Books

Consulting services, curriculum resources and support for families of special needs children.  
Sharon Hensley, MA— Director  
16465 Carlson Dr.  
Morgan Hill, CA 95037  
408-776-6691  
sharon@avcsbooks.com

## H.A.N.D.S. ON!

Support group for special needs homeschoolers in PA  
Newsletter: [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/handson\\_westernpa](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/handson_westernpa)  
Online forum: [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/wpahandson](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/wpahandson)

## S.N.A.C.K.S. of Delaware

(Special Needs and Christian Kids)  
Helping families and churches to minister to their special needs children. Serving the greater Delaware Valley and Tri-State region  
Contact: Tita Wyatt  
Email: tewjr@flash.net

## Homeschooling With Autism

Donna Glick 920-296-5462  
Provides resources and help for families homeschooling with autism.  
Located in Rio, Wisconsin..

## Specially Gifted c/o the Pegrams

7217 South Drive Richmond, VA 23225-1622  
(804) 323-1786  
Strengthuntostrength@juno.com A support group for families homeschooling special needs children. Part of a Christian family-based ministry operated by Dave and Deb Pegram. They also operate a private Christian "umbrella" school that provides transcripts, IEPs, testing and evaluative services.

## PRAISE

Parents Reaching Academically in Special Education  
A homeschool support group for parents homeschooling special needs children.  
947 Park SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 451-3620  
Contact Shannon Bloemendaal Email: sbloemen@aol.com

## Parents Instructing Challenged Children LEAH

www.piccnys.com  
piccleah@verizon.net  
New York state's Loving Education At Home. Special needs support and chapter for families homeschooling struggling learners.

## O.U.C.H. Ohio's Uniquely Challenged Homeschoolers

(formerly C.H.O.S.E.N. Christian Homeschool Special Educational Needs)  
Renee Silvaroli—Support Group Coordinator & Workshop Speaker. Meets at Silvaroli's home.  
Phone: (440) 944-4782  
Email: RCHOSEN@visn.net  
Please RSVP if you plan to attend a meeting.  
"Ohio Special Needs Resource Packet" available (at cost of \$10.00 plus \$2.50 postage/handling); State Newsletter \$5.00 (5 issues); workshops and special needs consultation available (\$1.00 for sample newsletter).

## Down Home Learning

Does your child have Down Syndrome? Need someone to talk to? Have some ideas to share? Contact: Diane Ryckman  
1453 Evans Rd. RR 7  
Creston, B.C. V0B 1G7 CANADA (250)-428-7798  
Email: ryckman@downhomelearning.net  
[www.downhomelearning.net](http://www.downhomelearning.net)

## Arizona - West Valley Autism Support Group

Contact Shelley 623-572-5289. Meets at New Life Comm. Church in Peoria, AZ second Tuesday of every month.

## Christian Cottage School

(303) 688-6626 Sedalia, Colorado  
Mike and Terry Spray founded CCS for diagnostic testing and prescribing curriculum.  
[www.christiancottage.com](http://www.christiancottage.com)

## Earthen Vessels Ministries

A support group in Central Maine, for families who home school special needs children. We encourage both moms and dads to join our group. We share ideas, accomplishments, and experiences. Learn about what works and what didn't. Be sure to check out our files for resources and post your favorite pictures in our gallery of beautiful faces! [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/earthen\\_vessels\\_ministries](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/earthen_vessels_ministries)

# Special Needs Support Groups

## Carrying To Term Resources

**American Association of Pro Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists.** [www.aaplog.org](http://www.aaplog.org)  
 AAPLOG National Office Contact Info:  
 Phone: (616) 546-2639.  
 Email: [info@aaplog.org](mailto:info@aaplog.org)

### Be not Afraid [www.benotafraid.net](http://www.benotafraid.net)

An online outreach to parents who have received a difficult prenatal diagnosis. The family stories, articles, and links within this site are presented as a resource for those who may have been asked to choose between terminating a pregnancy or continuing on despite the diagnosis.

**Waiting with Love site**  
[www.erichad.com/wwl](http://www.erichad.com/wwl)

**The Gloria M. Silverio Foundation**  
 "Safe Haven for Newborns"  
[www.asafehavenfornewborns.com](http://www.asafehavenfornewborns.com)  
 1-877-767-BABY (2229)

**Prenatal partners for life** [www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org](http://www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org)

**Living with Trisomy 13 or 18**  
[www.livingwithtrisomy13.org](http://www.livingwithtrisomy13.org)  
[www.trisomy18support.org](http://www.trisomy18support.org)

**Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep Infant Bereavement Photography** - Free, volunteer service provides beautiful pictures at birth to celebrate and remember baby.  
[www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org](http://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org)

**Carrying To Term Pages (Very Helpful)**  
[www.geocities.com/tabris02/](http://www.geocities.com/tabris02/)

**Perinatal Hospice**  
[www.perinatalhospice.org](http://www.perinatalhospice.org)

**Joanne O'Brien's Story,**  
 Brochure and Special Support for families with babies that may not live long after birth. [www.graceannenugent.netfirms.com](http://www.graceannenugent.netfirms.com)

## Post Abortion Resources

**Rachel's Vineyard Retreats**  
 1-877-HOPE-4-ME (1-877-467-3463)  
[www.RachelsVineyard.org](http://www.RachelsVineyard.org)

**Healing Hearts Ministries** (on-line counseling)  
[www.HealingHearts.org](http://www.HealingHearts.org) 1-888-792-8282

**Ramah International**  
[www.RamahInternational.org](http://www.RamahInternational.org)

**Save One,** [www.SaveOne.org](http://www.SaveOne.org)  
 1-866-329-3571



**Sharing God's Love with People who have Cognitive Impairments.**

**Friendship Ministries is a non-profit organization that exists to help churches and organizations around the world share God's love with people who have cognitive impairments.**

For more info  
 contact Nella Uilvlugt  
 888-866-8966 (ext. 2 --1)  
 E-mail [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)  
[www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)

## NATHHAN Web page

NATHHAN Lending Library catalog is arranged by subject.

Family Directory- Folks are listed by state and list disability. Form your own support network. Find families homeschooling with the same special needs you are dealing with. Search the *entire web site* for a subject of interest when you participate in the NATHHAN family directory. Additional password needed for security.

Discussion board - Get your questions answered by moms who are competent and experienced. A variety of subjects and responses makes just reading the discussions of others VERY interesting.

Classified Ads • Letters from Families •  
 Deuteronomy Dads • Mommy's Musing •  
 Children waiting for Moms and Dads  
 Favorite Resources

**Just \$25.00 / year for membership!**

**[www.nathhan.org](http://www.nathhan.org)**



## 1st Straight Talk

A Parents Guide for Correcting

# Childhood Mispronunciations

Written by  
Marisa J. Lapish, M.A. in Speech Pathology

- Charts explain normal sound development
- The *Consonant Cookbook*, suggestions to help with each consonant's correct sound
- Test forms and score sheets
- Word training lists

*An excellent resource for parents wishing to implement a quality speech therapy program without spending lots of money or going to the public school. We've used it successfully for over 10 years.*

—Tom Bushnell



**\$45.00**

Free Shipping!

## 1st Straight Talk's DVD

Watch Marisa demonstrate the sound "r" using the manual.

30 min. video supplements the manual.

Video is \$20.00 separate from the manual.

Combination Straight Talk 1 + DVD = **\$55.00**

Order online at [www.nathhan.org](http://www.nathhan.org) or use the order form on page 25!

## 2nd Straight Talk

*A Parent's Guide to:*



# Language Development

## A Christian Perspective

Written by

Marisa J. Lapish, M.A. in Speech Pathology  
and Tom and Sherry Bushnell, Directors of NATHHAN

- Exercises in Learning to Listen
- Nuts and Bolts of Language Training
- Increasing Auditory and Visual Comprehension
- Language Development Activities for the Christian Home
- Tests to Determine Exactly Where Your Child Needs Help
- Suggestions for Working with Children Ranging from Non-verbal to More Advanced in Language.



# \$45.00

112 page manual, free shipping!

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# CHASK— Christian Homes And Special Kids

## By Tom and Sherry Bushnell

Getting glimpses into the hearts of women who are in desperate need helps us all remember how very painful life can be.

Here is one story we sent to a group of CHASK donors this fall. It shares a closer look at birth moms making huge decisions.

Later in this article, we are also going to share a CHASK member's incredibly life-changing experience as a patient in an abortion clinic, as her baby had died inside her and had to be taken from her surgically. I am guessing that you will be as fascinated as I, and even more resolved to beg the Lord to open our eyes to women in need around us.

### Here is Nadia's story:

Reaching out her hand for help, Nadia pulled her heavy pregnant body up out of the low-seated lounge chair with the aid of Jenn, her CHASK friend.

Jenn, knowing how much the doctor appointments scared Nadia and set her sobbing with fresh grief, offered to take her home in her car instead of dealing with a cab. They needed to talk. Nadia nodded with a small, grateful smile. Unborn baby Joey was no better. The level 2 ultrasound showed unhealthy swelling in her baby. Now hard choices needed to be made. Her syphilis virus, although being presently treated with penicillin, was taxing her body and little Joe's.

Over and over, Nadia mentally whipped herself for getting involved with little Joe's birth dad... she knew better. He had infected her and their baby. In jail now, he didn't even know about little Joe. "All the better," she thought. "He would have pressured me to abort." Truth was, a few months ago she would have aborted little Joe too.... but thankfully she was too far along before she found out. Smiling slightly, she looked up into Jenn's eyes. "At least I can thank the Lord for one thing about my ongoing syphilis infection. Being sick off and on hid the fact that I was really pregnant, so I didn't abort him!"

It was 2 months to go yet before her due date.... but a huge, unhealthy placenta and lots of extra water made her feel as big as a whale. Truth was, her tummy was gigantic... Now, today, even more scary... her baby's liver and tummy were also enlarged. A symptom that her baby had syphilis too.

The doctors were giving no guarantees about baby Joe living. Today they were talking about an early birth, and the huge risks to her and to her baby. Nadia wasn't sure her doctors were being honest with her. Were they painting a dismal picture to force her into an early birth (abortion)?

Jenn didn't seem bugged by their silent shaking of heads. Jenn was truly a gift from God. Nadia knew that she was undeserving of her friendship and that the Lord had really blessed her through Jenn. Nadia was a new Christian and was awestruck by the love that Jenn had for her and her baby.

Now, both you and I know that Jenn must be a really special person to be laying aside her life, her family time, even opening her heart up to being in pain, with Nadia and her baby. Jenn, Nadia and little Joe's story can be told over and over again, just fitting different birth moms, babies with medical concerns and CHASK friends.

Nadia cherishes every moment she got to hold her Little Joe before he went to be with Jesus, just a few days after his birth. Happily, Nadia's dream of being healed and serving Jesus in a special way came true. She is a very



dedicated crisis pregnancy center worker. She knows what it means to both love and let go, letting God have His perfect way. She has blessed many women around her who have had similar stories.

## Ministering to the heart of CHASK birth families:

I would like to share with you a typical e-mail, just as it was written to us:

I found out recently that my 18-year-old daughter is pregnant. Shortly after that, she had her first ultrasound. They found then that the baby has a big hole in his heart. This caused alarm to the doctor and he ordered an amniocentesis to be done right away. After 10 days we got the results. The baby has Down syndrome. Everything I have read over the past week tells me that an open adoption would be best for him. Obviously my daughter doesn't have the means to take care of this baby properly. Between the physical therapy, speech therapy and many other things that are going to be a necessity to even try to take this on, I feel the best way to go is an open adoption. My wife and I don't have it, nor does the baby's father's family have it.

We have begun to talk about the options available to her, but we need some guidance. I spoke to a couple different agencies this past Monday and 2 of the 3 gave me the name of CHASK and told me to speak with a man named Tom. After hearing this from two of them, I felt I had to get in touch with someone in your organization. Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response.

Perhaps you are reading this e-mail and thinking, "What would I say to this family?" They are struggling to find God's will for their lives and the life of their daughter / grandson. Here at CHASK we help families work through medical advice, family feelings and practical issues. Every family is different.

Thankfully, this baby's birth grandparents, on the birth daddy's side, lovingly took this baby as their own, even though they had never dreamed of dealing with disability.

CHASK is pretty different in our approach to adoption. Our first wish is for birth parents to choose to parent the child God has given them. If they can't, we share with birth families CHASK bios of select potential adoptive families to help them along in their decision making.

Now, this is where I will have to say CHASK adoptive families are incredible. One of the stipulations about being a CHASK adoptive family is that we need to be more concerned about ministering to birth parents than adopting. This takes totally surrendering the whole situation to the Lord and letting him work out His will, in His timing, in their lives and our lives.

Many times we open our hearts and home, just to be "rejected" for the next CHASK family. Or a birth parent makes a choice to "keep our baby because we can't find a good enough adoptive home." We say AMEN! We'll gladly bear that, so that a birth family can open their hearts to their baby.

Recently an Indian couple gave birth to a baby boy with Down syndrome. They were very distraught with the whole idea of dealing with special needs, both culturally and financially. The birth dad was very much against the idea of raising him. The birth mom was very torn. Much to her surprise, she was falling in love with her baby. She spent all her time in the hospital with him, rocking, loving on him, because in her mind, these were her last few days with him. The whole idea of "special needs" was social suicide to them.

They contacted CHASK to find an adoptive family, as their baby was going to be released from the hospital in a bit and they did not want to take him home.

We presented them with a couple CHASK families in their state. None really suited what they were looking for. We tried again, sending them 5 more from various states. No answer from them. (This is usually a good sign!)

A few weeks later we found out that the birth family has decided to keep their precious baby and are working through the emotional part of dealing with special needs. We thank the Lord

for their submission to the Lord's will for their lives and look forward to hearing from them in the future. NATHHAN families are already surrounding them and giving them resources and encouragement.

Here is another set of e-mails. One is from us responding to a birth mom that is agonizing about a decision. She had been sent quite a few CHASK families. Her response is pretty classic as she makes a decision for her baby with special needs.

Dear Amy,

I think that the families CHASK has sent you are pretty much what we have to offer...unless you really feel like you are not seeing what you are looking for. If that is the case, we need to know more specifically about what kind of families we need to help you look for. Are you interested in a more open adoption, closer to home than just e-mails and letters at this point?

The Ross family has been praying for you a lot. I know that their family can certainly feel for what you have been going through, as they have also experienced a baby with special needs with a chromosomal difference.

So we can make sure we got the families to you, please check that you got the following CHASK family bios:

Handson  
Ross  
Billins  
Mavis  
Jordan  
Veudala  
Nichols  
Beemish

Did you get all 8?

When you are interested in getting to know one of the families more, just let me know and we will give you their contact info or vice-versa. I know that any of them would be thrilled to correspond with you. Since your baby will be born soon, we would like to suggest choosing a family so they can begin contacting a lawyer and making arrangements for you to sign right after your baby is born, if that is your wish.

Amy's reply:

Hi Sherry, thank you for e-mailing me back. Sorry this has taken me a little while to respond. Things are tough right now. I did get a chance to look over the information on the families and my husband and I agree that the Mavis family would be the best choice for my baby.

I know you told me a little bit about how CHASK works when the baby is born. I know that he is obviously going to have some health problems. So I guess our biggest question is if this family knows that he will more than likely require a lot of medical care??? I am sure you all have way more experience than we do.

We are just so scared and don't know what to expect when this all takes place. It's been a roller coaster of emotion and fear of the unknown. If you would like to give the Mavis family my e-mail address that would be fine. That way we can start communicating.

Thank you so much for all of your help in this horrible time.

Amy

This situation ended up being interesting for us, as the birth mom chose a family, felt reassured, gave birth with peace in her heart, knowing that her baby was going to be in a loving home. That peace for her was worth so much... Her baby was born and indeed was very sick. He lived just a few days and went home to be with Jesus.

Interestingly, they never did contact the CHASK adoptive family, but held the phone number and e-mail in her purse in case her baby lived.

We praise God for families that are willing to walk down the road of sorrow with people that may never have experienced God's love without a CHASK family sharing with them.

**Here is an eye-opening look inside an abortion clinic....**

This article is shared by a wonderful CHASK family, hoping to make a difference in the

lives of birth families that have an unborn baby with special needs.

### Written and experienced by CeCe Garrett

I have a pro-life story to share if someone would like a first-person view of later term abortion. While my husband was in the early years of seminary, two years ago this summer, in fact, we lost a baby at 16 weeks. After 6 days of labor, they decided I needed to see a specialist. Our OB never once told us that he was sending us to an abortion clinic. This is my story:

## Honoring Our Eli

One Thursday night in June, I placed our two-year-old in her bed, kissed her forehead and settled in for a much needed slumber next to my husband Larry. Life was good. Our family would be welcoming a new member in late November and my belly was getting round.

Just a little over a year ago, we packed up our house, the kids and my mom (who needs full time care due to stroke) and replanted in a small town in Ohio in order for Larry to go to seminary and follow his lifelong dream of becoming a pastor. We deliberated on names for our new baby for weeks and despite Larry's love for New Testament Greek names like Mathias, we had finally agreed on two: Lily Claire or Eli Owen. Our little sweet pea was busy swimming around and causing great fits of giggles from me while we read books to our toddler about welcoming siblings earlier that afternoon. Life was so very good.

Early Friday morning a frighteningly familiar sense came over me and I awoke. A clear feeling or message, if you will, letting me know that life was about to change. The last time I had felt this



**CeCe and her family.  
CeCe is 16 weeks pregnant with little tiny Eli.**

was the day Mom had her stroke. I jumped from my bed and went to check on her. My mother was sound asleep and doing just fine. Our twelve-year-old was fine. Toddler and Larry: fine. That's when I knew. I waited until daybreak all the while praying. I prayed well-formed thoughts that morning. It would be the last time in a long time that words came when I opened my heart to God.

Several hours later, I remember three nurses trying to find a heartbeat, two different dopplers and then the ultrasound tech. There was such awful silence. Our Eli was clearly shown on the screen in black and white. Perfect. Still. Gone. Life had changed.

After talking with our families and loved ones, I was admitted to the hospital for induction of labor. For six days, I labored and it was decided that I wasn't able to deliver. My body would simply not let go. Our OB was not trained for the surgical procedure needed to remove our baby, called a D&E at our late gestation, so they sent me to a "specialist" in Columbus, OH. It didn't take long to realize that this doctor's specialization was not tailored to women who have suffered the loss of a baby. This clinic was primarily used to perform early and late abortions.

I cannot begin to tell you the stinging welt I felt watching these women waiting with me. My hand went over my belly as if to protect our little one... I quickly reminded myself that there was no use. Our baby was gone. I sat silently as others laughed and had small talk. One couple was actually planning a Hawaiian vacation. Resentful isn't even the word to describe the raw pain and condemnation I felt when I looked at these women. Could God really love them as much as He loves me?

The nurse called us back to meet the doctor who would perform the D&E. The doctor explained what would happen the next day while he inserted long sticks made of seaweed into my cervix. These sticks, called



laminaria, are used to open the cervix over a period of a day so that the surgery can be done. We were told that husbands were not permitted past the waiting room on “surgery days” and I would be ready for “pick up” at noon. We would have to be there at 7:30AM to insure our spot.

I feel the need now to tell you that I have always considered myself pro-life. And, like most of you, would nod in agreement when priests and pastors spoke on such topics. I saw the abortion issue as one of the many battlefronts that we, in this day and age of spiritual warfare, have to contend with. What I am about to share with you is a firsthand account of my day, one that I can only compare to walking into the belly of the beast. I must warn you that what you are going to read from here on will upset and offend... and I hope educate.

Larry brought me to the doctor’s office at 7:30 AM on the dot and sat with me as long as he could. We had no one to watch our children and I really didn’t want them to be there. I sent Larry off to amuse the kids while I waited to be called back. The office was very busy for “surgery” day and the lighthearted small talk familiar to the day before had made its leave. There were 18 women waiting with me. Since companions were prohibited from joining patients, everyone waiting, waited alone. The receptionist was the first of many to tell me that I would be the only woman today who was there because of a “fetal demise,” a term I had grown to hate over the last week.

I noticed while waiting that I was the only woman stroking her belly. The irony burned and I felt a swell of anger that only God could hold. I had never really felt what hate must be until that morning. I remember asking God to unclench my spiritual fists just as the nurse called my name. Within seconds, I was ushered into an exam room, told to strip and lay on the table. At that point the nurse placed an IV in my arm and patted my forehead. She said “won’t be long, Hon. It’ll be all over.” Then, she strapped my legs down into the stirrups, basically rendering me helpless— impossible to move. My head was taped to the table and she left leaving the door open behind her.

I prayed. I prayed for Jesus to be there with me. I

needed Him to hold my hand. I needed to not be alone with this suffocating darkness around me. I then heard it for the first time. A vacuum was so loud in the room down the hall that I actually jumped a bit and the tape on my head protested by pulling out some hair. Horrified, I tried to close my eyes and succeeded for a moment until the sound changed. I let out a scream, which sent the nurse running in. She asked if I was in pain and I told her the noise was scaring me. The nurse, well meaning, or perhaps, reaching out in hopes of opening my eyes to the horrors going on there explained that the change in sound was the doctor “catching the fetus.” She patted me on the head again and I asked her if it was ever really over. She left. The door was open wider this time.

A few minutes passed and I found myself no longer praying for Our Savior to be there with me. I prayed for Him to hold the 18 other hands. I needed Him to walk those 18 precious alive babies about to be killed, to their heavenly home. As the tears moistened the tape and matted my hair, I saw him. The curt doctor from yesterday was leaving the first room. He was wearing your normal green/blue scrubs and a white plastic butcher’s apron. The blood was so bright where his hands had wiped life off onto his protective plastic apron. My stomach still turns when I think back to this image. The doctor ripped off his latex gloves, threw them into a waste bin in the hall and went into the next room. When the vacuum started up again, I resumed praying. The kind of prayer where no words form, no sounds slip from mouths, just an internal kind of silent wail that may not be noticed by someone sitting next to you, but undoubtedly shakes the far corners of Heaven. I was all too aware that this had become my mode of opening up my heart to God lately, and that day, my wails were louder than ever before.

More gloves thrown, more blood on his apron and three more babies were gone and I started to try to move my legs. I wanted to run. There had to be another doctor who could do this procedure. I couldn’t get free. An overwhelming sense of panic blanketed me then I heard a

voice from inside my heart. This voice only asked one question. "Can the others leave if they want to?" I started to vomit at the thought. The words came to my lips and I blurted the question out just as the nurse was cleaning my face off. She was quick to inform me that if these girls had no other options, they wouldn't be there to begin with if they did. She said I had it easy, no choice to be made. At first, I wanted to punch the head-patting nurse right in the chin. It wasn't until days later that her statement punched me right in the gut.

All in all, I heard eight abortions and saw the bloody doctor nine times. The last time, it was my turn. I drifted off to sleep, under general anesthesia, and awoke empty. Nineteen of us woke up in the same huge recovery room. Nineteen of us were keenly aware of how painfully empty we were. I held my belly and cried. I wanted my husband with me. When I asked for Larry, I was told he would be called back when I was stable. And I was also told that while I was out, I upset the nurse so much that she had to leave the room. I, in my deep sleep, recited the 23rd Psalm seventeen times. She couldn't handle it and had to leave.

At that time, I could not quote much of the Bible. I was learning the Bible for the first time with my son. It was amazing, learning what most of you all have known for years. And reading the Bible with my son for the first time was such an awesome experience to share. That being said, we had made it halfway through the Old Testament when we lost Eli. I was not as familiar with Psalms as I am today. God had been walking with me and let everyone there know that He was present.

Eight days after the day I walked through hell... I developed a life threatening blood clot and spent several days in the hospital. Those days were spent in quiet time with God. I would have to write an entire book to fully explain those days of solitude with just me and Our Daddy. I came home knowing a couple of awesome things... I haven't walked on my own two feet for years, I can fully praise my Jesus while feeling unbelievable grief AND I don't know how, or when or in what form... but I know that Eli's tiny lifespan has changed us as a family and will impact someone else in a very mighty way. Our

tiny baby boy had weight, he had a purpose and he has a Mommy, Daddy, Brother and Sister that miss him every day. Does Jesus love those women as much as me? Yes. Is there a chance for redemption? Yes! Could those women and the women who have come to that crossroads later have made a better choice? Certainly. I pray for those women from the clinic... and I pray for each of you reading.. I may not know your name or your faces... but I know how blessed I am by each of you. Thank you for considering Life. Thank you for hearing our story and honoring our baby Eli.

As a pro-life wife of a pastor... walking into an abortion clinic was an experience I cannot forget. My story is on my blog...

<http://www.cecemetsworld.wordpress.com>

Click on the link appearing on the upper right side "The Beginning"



**CeCe and Larry Garrett with their daughter**

### How does CHASK work?

- Adoptive family fills out a CHASK application ([www.chask.org](http://www.chask.org)) Be thorough in your CHASK bio. A nice picture helps.
- A birth mom in crisis contacts us. Are there any CHASK families willing to take her pre-born baby or child with special needs? We on an average send birth moms 2 - 5 families to choose from.
- (Pre-born) We contact adoptive families, getting permission to send the birth mom their information. The CHASK web site has children that need homes. Click on "Waiting Children". Sometimes we need help with a specific situation. If we do, we post info on web site with contact directions or e-mail for specific children.
- Potential adoptive family and birth mom handle details such as communication, transportation, lawyer fees.

**Adoptive family should:**

- Have a home study done or be almost completed.
- Adoptive family should locate an adoption attorney and be aware of their state's laws. (In some states, in order to avoid the appearance of impropriety, the adoption should be handled through an adoption lawyer. Some states require agency facilitate adoptions only.

Adoptive family should be willing to pray and receive God's will for the birth mom's, baby's, and their lives, no matter what the decision reached by the birth mom. We appreciate your patience as parents try to decide what is right for their child and their situation.

### Please join us in ministering to birth parents.

NATHHAN /CHASK P.O. Box 310 Moyie Springs, ID 83845  
[www.chask.org](http://www.chask.org)

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Disabilities I can share about with birth parents:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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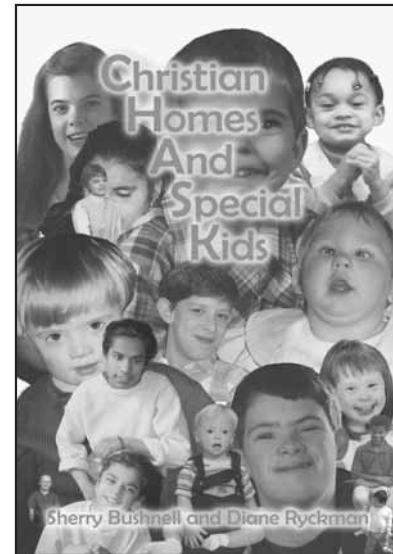
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## CHASK



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# Loving Ezra

## Tom and Marae Keller, West Salem, Ohio

One never knows where God will take them when He calls them to parent, whether by birth or adoption.

We have known the trials and joys of having biological children: pregnancy loss, premature births, healthy delivery, illnesses, accomplishments, matching, placement, premature and/or medically fragile babies, healing, marriages, and most recently death.

We were richly blessed in June of 2008 to bring home our two newest sons. Boaz Andrew, born 3-22-2008, came to us through The Gladney Center in Texas. In spite of having hypoplastic right heart, Boaz has done wonderfully well. He is developing physically and is on-target developmentally. We give praise to God for all He has done for Boaz and trust Him to guide the continuing care of Boaz.

Ezra Kailash, born 3-24-2008, was premature at 29 weeks and weighed only 1 pound, 8 ounces. Ezra was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and came to us through Adoption Link. He was the third of his biological parents' children to present with Intrauterine Growth Retardation. We received Ezra knowing the eldest biological brother had suffered from a seizure disorder and started regressing developmentally around the age of six months. Their first son died at fourteen months of age. We also knew the bio parents had a living child who was diagnosed with Williams Syndrome.

The birth mother had never been able to heal from the first loss and had difficulty considering parenting Ezra. She had questioned how I as a mother could consider parenting Ezra when I too knew the pain of burying my own flesh and blood. Thomas and I had buried our daughter Annah in 1999 due to complications from prematurity. My response to her was that it did not matter that there were unanswered questions for Ezra or that we had no assurance as to the length of his



life. Ezra needed to be loved whether his life was one more day or years on end.

It took me three long years to walk through the valley of Annah's death and yet I knew the Lord carried me and had used that experience for good. Ezra was to be the eighth premature child whom Thomas and I would parent. Loving Annah had taught us there are no guarantees as to the health, development or lifespan of our children or any child. They are truly all God's and he has ordained every detail of their beings as well as the number of their days.

It was with that peace from God that Ezra came home to us on June 23, 2008. We were home for less than two weeks when the problems started to manifest. I suspected reflux and aspiration. A swallow study led to a g-tube and almost a month in Akron Children's Hospital. This was the first of over 270 days inpatient. The seizures manifested early in the appearance of infantile spasms and continuing with myoclonic jerks after he reached a year of age. Medications were not fully effective in spite of trying various combinations of meds. Ezra seemed to always be getting ill with either a virus or a bacterial infection in his blood. We had to go to J-tube feeds due to dysmotility and continuing issues with reflux in spite of

surgical intervention. All the illnesses and the involvement of his eyes (CVI), neurological system, muscular system, and gastro-intestinal tract led the pediatrician to encourage us to look into mitochondrial disease.

We ended up seeing Dr. Bruce Cohen at the Cleveland Clinic and eventually had muscle and liver biopsies taken to attempt to obtain a diagnosis. The liver revealed Complexes I, II, III and IV. Even now we are awaiting outstanding test results. Although we were utilizing various nutrients and supplements in addition to prescribed medications, Ezra's body continued to struggle to grow and develop. We finally got a mediport (having had broviacs short term in the past) with the hope of being able to treat at home. We needed it --- right away!

Our eldest son entered a courtship in May and became engaged in July. July 28 found Ezra admitted again and he remained there through September 6. The wedding was planned for September 19. That gave me thirteen days to finish preparations at home for the wedding. Was I ever grateful to God that He allowed us that respite with our little one home and amongst the family. It does sadden me though to consider that Ezra was spending a great deal of time asleep as he was on IV vancomycin and multiple oral medications.

Our dresses (for my five daughters and myself) were completed on schedule even with multiple trips to various doctors. The wedding was beautiful. Seth and Regina (nee Glick) had seriously considered all they wanted to take place as they truly wanted the focus to be on the Lord and His gracious gift of salvation. Friends, Steve and Pam Clutter, had graciously offered to help with the little boys during the ceremony. They did a wonderful job and Tom and I were able to focus on the marriage of our eldest.

Ezra did not seem to feel well that day and he suffered the dislodging of his J-G tube. That meant I had to replace it with a standard G-tube and reduce his feeds to maintenance rate to hopefully avoid aspiration. The attempt was futile as he suffered from aspiration and quickly developed pneumonia. Tuesday morning brought the blessing of laughter and squeals of pleasure; however, this was quickly followed by



coughing. Ezra had only coughed rarely in his life. We had come to learn that he had more than BPD from prematurity and his lungs were in a continual state of decline.

Dr. Roach, our pediatrician, ordered a chest x-ray; however, the pneumonia did not reveal itself. Wednesday morning was the replacement date for the J-G tube. The day started bright and early as we were to be at ACH by 6:30 a.m. I informed the staff that he was very ill and I had an order for a repeat x-ray. The tube was replaced and the x-ray repeated.

Sweet little Ezra began laboring to breathe in spite of the assistance of a portable oxygen tank. My heart grieved sorely as I considered his days on this earth may be drawing to a close. The x-ray revealed pneumonia - right upper lobe collapse, involvement of right lower lobe, atelectasis of all lung areas. We were taken from the Emergency Department to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit where the consideration of a ventilator was broached.

Ezra never left the PICU, at least not in the physical body in which he entered it. Shiloh, one of our 16-year-old daughters who had accompanied me that morning, and I were soon joined by Tom and the other children, as well as my mother and various friends and family, and Ezra's pediatrician. Some of these people had given Ezra respite care so I could go home on occasion and be with family. Ezra's birthparents and a sister arrived shortly after Ezra died.

Ezra's last earthly hours were not what I would have envisioned had I ever seriously

contemplated the thought of his passing. However, we were blessed that those close to home could be together. The hospital PICU staff and Palliative Care team aided in making memories and having Ezra comfortable as he fought his last earthly battle. We shared hymns which we pray ministered to his soul as they did ours. We were able to hold our precious son and assure him that he would soon enter into the presence of the Lord. I had always told him that God would heal him, either here or in eternity, so I assured him that he would be whole and complete and would know no more suffering. He knew we were there and seemed to take comfort in the hugs and sounds of those around him. It was hard letting him go and yet we knew the decision was the Lord's. Ezra entered into his heavenly rest on September 23, 2009 at eleven o'five in the evening. He would have been eighteen months on the twenty-fourth!

Our eldest son's in-laws were at the hospital when Ezra died. He immediately called a family member who graciously fashioned a casket for our little one. We were blessed by the kindness of many as preparations were made for burial the next evening.

Visitation was held in our home from 5-7 p.m. with the funeral at the close. Family and young people filled in the grave as a friend sang acapella, a beautiful hymn "In the sweet by and by". God graciously carried us through and blessed us; even now He is aiding us in our grief.

We could not have predicted the road we would travel with Ezra back in June of 2008; however, we know it was all in the will of God that we obediently follow His commandments. There were many struggles along the way. We were stretched beyond our human comprehension. We had to battle the enemy as he would plant well-meaning people in our paths to give us advice which is not even worth repeating. The advice reflected a godless society that feels we must look out for ourselves and not consider others.

We found ways for the younger children to be with mom during the long stays in the hospital. The little girls were familiar with hospital "slumber parties" and found out learning can continue even when daily life is altered. The young men and ladies in the family coped as best they could and were stretched beyond the norm, thus developing strengths which they had not cultivated prior to having Ezra.

Loving Ezra is a choice we shall never regret. He was a precious child who thrilled at the sight or sound of those who loved him. He was a bright child who had a body which did not respond to his wishes. His struggle to move was intense but



**Tom and Marae Keller, with Boaz and Ezra**

his determination was great. He was a delightful child who had a wonderful belly laugh and chuckled with glee when he heard his father's bird-calls. He was a wanted child.....he has been loved!

Some would focus on the fact that Ezra was "special needs". They are right to a degree, Ezra was dependent upon those who would love and care for him - he had needs. However, the "special" is not a negative thing. The special is that he loved with a heart of innocence and received all people as they were. His legacy is good in the sight of the Lord.



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# NATHHAN / CHASK Resource Room

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**God’s Special Child -** This is the story of a family, working with their son who had Prader Willie syndrome. They candidly share their success and failures. The results are an encouraging book that shows God’s faithfulness and the wisdom of following His ways.  
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# NATHHAN / CHASK Resource Room

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Deadline dates: Sept 15th, March 15th

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—This is not a complete phonics program, but created for children with delays that need to move V..E..R..Y slowly. Some of our special children CAN learn to read via the phonics method. This is an excellent (and cheap) way to practice. Find out if phonics is possible for your child.

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# The Girl in the Beautiful Blue Dress

**By Eric and Holly Nelson**

Special Hope Network

P.O. Box 7060

Charlottesville, VA 22906 - 7060

[www.SpecialHopeNetwork.com](http://www.SpecialHopeNetwork.com)

The first time I saw her she was crouched down outside of her house which was comprised of a short structure no more than 7 or 8 feet high with the outside dimensions of 10 ft. by 10 ft. at the most. It was made of a combination of “reclaimed” brick, scrap wood and pieces of tin. She was crouching in the dirt outside the door, playing a game that seemed to somewhat resemble jacks but was played with rocks and no ball. As we got closer I could see that her feet, legs, hands and arms were covered in a thin layer of the ubiquitous red African earth. I’d been told by several missionaries while I was there that Africans don’t see dirt. They don’t comment on it or fret about it. It is just there, like oxygen, which even after my brief stay, I realized is the wisest, most sensible course of action, because there is simply no avoiding it.

She stood to look at me, and immediately I recognized those perfectly proportioned slightly diminutive features, and beautiful almond-shaped eyes of someone who has Down syndrome. She was wearing what appeared to be a man’s large white oxford button down shirt with no sleeves. After looking at me for a moment or two, her features became surprised and she ran quickly into the house and slid the makeshift door closed. The village orphan worker chuckled and tried to say carefully, “I am not sure she has seen many...” and then he paused, perhaps not quite sure how he should finish the sentence, so I pointed to my ball cap and said “Red Sox fans?”, and he said, “something like that!”, and laughed.

But even before we could get to the door and call out our presence, the door was being slid open, and out stepped a woman who was wearing what looked to be the exact same outfit we had seen on the girl only moments before – the well-worn sleeveless white man’s button down shirt! She was pulling gently behind her the girl we had seen outside the door, who was **now**



dressed in a beautiful short-sleeved blue dress with ruffles and pleats around the skirt. Her face, hands, and feet had also all been wiped clean (and all within the time it took us to walk the forty or fifty feet to their door!). So, it may be that Africans don’t recognize dirt, but evidently mothers still do!

We said our introductions, and asked if we could sit for a moment. “I work with children who are special, like yours, and I’d like to ask you some questions.” She was cautious about her response, but agreed, and went inside to bring out two makeshift chairs. Since she appeared a little suspicious (perhaps... she was NOT a Red Sox fan?), I pulled out the picture of my family as I had now done repeatedly and had always noticed an immediate easing of tensions and increasing of openness once they saw I was a father of three adoptive children with intellectual disabilities. On this occasion, however, it seemed to produce the opposite effect. She gripped the picture with two hands, then began to look carefully from the picture of



my girls to her own daughter, back and forth, back and forth, until tears welled up in her eyes.

Being a man not peculiarly perceptive when it comes to emotions (is that statement redundant?), I forged ahead with my questions hoping that conversation would somehow distract her from whatever painful feelings the picture had produced. So began my interview, a series of rapid-fire questions beginning with her health during pregnancy, childbirth, developmental milestones, etc. The purpose of each is to help give me both an overarching picture of her daughter's development, but also help identify any potential concerns or red flags. At some point in the interview, however, I finally lifted my eyes from my clipboard, where I was furiously writing her responses, and I saw the anguish on this mother's face, and her tears that could no longer be held back.

Before I could even ask what was so troubling her, she blurted out a question, half speech/ half sob and completely disconnected from anything we had just been discussing, "**How fast can your children read?!**" I was so taken aback by this emotionally packed non sequitur that I think I simply looked down meaningfully and mumbled something intentionally incoherent (I've not been married 20 years for nothing!).

Quieter, but still in between sobs she confessed, "My daughter reads slowly, much slower than other children... I think it's my fault." The picture was getting clearer. I asked, timidly, "What does she read?" And her sobs halted long enough for her to look up at me with a face that showed she thought my question was utterly ridiculous (I have always been amazed that all the women I have ever known all have the remarkable ability to pause whatever deep emotional current they were overcome by in order to declare how ridiculous I am). "Books!" she exclaimed, "Books, of course!"

Now it was my turn to give a look of incredulity. "Chapter books?" I asked, trying to hide the suspicion in my voice. "Yes", she said with exas-



peration, "of course the books have chapters". I waited a moment, for she was trying to catch her breath and wipe her eyes. When she finally looked up at me again, I held her eyes for a moment and then spoke intentionally very slowly so this could seep into her heart, "My children can't read chapter books! They know some words, and all their letters, but **my** children can't read like **your** daughter." Immediately, her hands went up to cover her face. The tears had started again, but there was something else there in her eyes, something that looked a lot like someone trying desperately to suppress laughter. The fight did not last long, for it was within less than a minute that the laughter won, and all she could do was try to stifle the volume with her hand and attempt to stay upright on her rickety chair.

For an instant, (but thankfully, I don't think my face betrayed me), I was honestly offended that she would laugh at my children's inability to read at the level her child could. But it was that thought, or to be more accurate, the emotion with which I felt that thought, that finally made me see what I had been missing all along. She saw my girls in the photograph dressed in their pretty dresses, so similar in features to her own and she assumed that her lack in economics, opportunity and education would reveal themselves when I compared her girl to mine. Therefore each question of my interview seemed to her to only establish more completely how stunted her daughter must be; born in a hut, no early diagnosis, no physical therapy, no occupational therapy, no

speech therapy, had never seen a developmental pediatrician, never seen a pediatrician at all, no, no, no. And although I never thought this even for a moment with her, I imagine she added to that list of “no’s”, “has a good mother” – NO!

But for the very reason that she is a good parent, she felt that all her daughter’s lacks or weaknesses were her fault. Which was why her daughter not being able to read as fast as other children weighed on her so greatly; it was just one more NO. The “no” that broke her mother’s heart. Not coincidentally then, it was my parental “no” that brought her consolation. For all our girls’ many advantages, for all their “yes’s”, we too, had our “no’s”. I realized this and it was easy to laugh with her, rejoicing over her daughter’s “yes”.

Something special happened after that. We talked at some length, but the interview was over. We were now just two people desperately wanting to be good parents to the children we absolutely adored, who in God’s providence all happened to have Down syndrome.

(Editor’s note: Each of Eric and Holly’s children have been adopted from Brazil and have Down syndrome. They, as a family, are headed for Zambia in a few months to minister to orphans who have intellectual disabilities. So they might be part of a very rare group...orphans who have lived on three continents by the time they are adults! I am sure you would enjoy their web site:

[www.specialhopenetwork.com](http://www.specialhopenetwork.com)

## Christian Cottage School



**Teri Spray**

### **Directors:**

**Mike and Teri Spray.**

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# Letters From Families

## Family Seeking Computer Math Program

Tyler and Jeanne  
tyjean7@embarqumail.com

Do you know of a computer math program (late elem-jr high level) that does not require writing out the problems on a sheet of paper? We have a son (Sam) with CP who has lots of difficulty with fine motor tasks. We'd like to find a program for him that he can do relatively independently but that can be done with keyboard use rather than pencil/paper. We also have a son (11-year-old), Charlie, with DS. We are just now taking him out of public school special ed and are home schooling him. Charlie is non-verbal. We just started the Love and Learning program and he likes it. We'll continue with this program, but want to really work on his communication. He seems to have lots in his noggin, but cannot verbally express it. Do you have any other suggestions? Also, any suggestions for a math curriculum? He visually knows his numbers. His fine motor/writing skills are pre-school level. I'm thinking of some sort of computer program along with a simple work book. Along with these two gentlemen, we home school Max, our 12-year-old who also has CP (a genetic disorder). So, any practical help in these areas as well as prayer is welcome! Tyler and Jeanne

.....

## Debbie Mills (Author of IEP Planner)

I enjoyed the large family articles. How about some large family recipes.... that are fast and easy for middle schoolers to put together! We could probably put a whole cookbook together with our ideas!

FYI... Have you seen The Official Book of Homeschooling Cartoons??? Pretty funny stuff, there are three volumes. And the author gives permission to copy for a newsletter if you give him the credit. Check it out at [www.familymanweb.com](http://www.familymanweb.com) to order. Each book is \$5.00

## Debbie Mill's ideas for socks....

2 lingerie bags per person. 1 for clean socks, the other for dirty socks. Just wash the whole lingerie bag and let them sort it out. The trick is getting them to put their dirty socks in the bag as they take them off.

## Tutor offering help for families...

I'm a credentialed tutor who contributed to your newsletter or dialogues 3-4 or 5+ yrs ago.

I tutor in Orange County, CA, and I have developed some new techniques to help special education students, families and teachers since I have been working with children who had their own special needs.

I am permanently disabled by fibromyalgia, and tutor to supplement my low disability income. I can't afford memberships, but I would like a chance to offer comments, suggestions, and sometimes full techniques to help children.

Linda L. Popenhagen, Anaheim, CA  
lpopenhagenatutor@aol.com

.....

## Need Help for 2-Year-Old

Debbie Pugh  
debbiepugh@comcast.net

I am hoping that when this is read someone will be able to help us find an answer for this child. The child is crossing his left leg over his right leg and "tenses" his muscles. He has taken this position off and on since he was probably 5 months old. We thought maybe when he would walk it would stop but it hasn't. He now can balance and we see him do it standing up. We can distract him now or tell him to move his leg and he will. We see him do this on his back with his leg in the air when he goes to sleep.

At one point he stopped all together. We thought it may be it was a type of coping with pain as he was teething. His mom took him both to an MD and a chiropractor and both said

his legs were normal. Any input will be welcomed.

.....

**Lisa Saunders, author of Riding the Train with Elizabeth, shares...**

Years ago, NATHHAN News was one of the first places to publish my story about my daughter Elizabeth, born disabled by congenital cytomegalovirus. Writing was how I dealt with the initial shock of the severity of her condition (she was unable to move or speak), and getting my story accepted by your publication made me feel less alone in the new world I had entered.

Many writers have asked me, "How can I get my story published?" I just want to let your readers know that I'm making available a FREE e-book, "How to Publish and Promote Your Work," because I want to share what has worked for me.

Not only does sharing one's story heal the soul, but it can also bring healing to the soul of the reader. To find out how I finally figured out how to get articles and books published, all people need to do is to go to my website at [www.authorlisasaunders.com](http://www.authorlisasaunders.com) and click on the "Get Published" button.

Thanks for all you do to make us parents feel less alone! Love Lisa Saunders

[www.joyceherzog.com](http://www.joyceherzog.com)



**Adopting a Baby from CHASK**  
**Stephanie**  
**[stephanie@serffcreative.com](mailto:stephanie@serffcreative.com)**

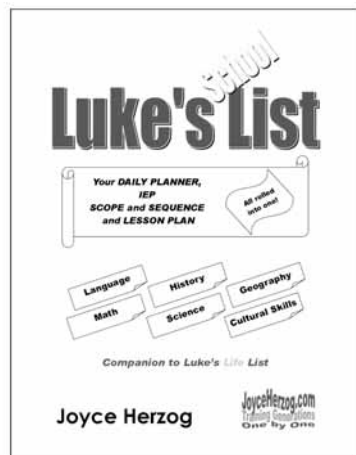
I wanted to write to you for two reasons. The first is that we are adopting a baby that is blind and would like to get connected with other homeschooling families who have taught their blind children at home.

We went last week to a "center for the blind" in Denver and it was awful. The woman who was in charge of our functional vision evaluation had some preconceived ideas about our family size (now 7 children) and being able to teach our new son. We really want Gavin to be able to have the security and love of our home in all of his learning.

The second reason is that we found our little boy on your CHASK website. His name was Kai Matthew. We had a series of amazing miracles that brought Gavin to our home. I frequent your website. We have adopted 4 children of the 6 we already have. One is medically fragile with DiGeorge Syndrome, heart condition, feeding tube, etc. One is FAS. One is Meth. We are very blessed. At the time, we were current with our home study and still waiting for another blessing with our local county. We were specifically waiting for a medical baby.

We never thought that we could afford a private adoption. When we saw Gavin's picture and read about Lowe syndrome we decided to just email and see if he was still available.

Hope's Promise in Castle Rock is the agency. Paula from Hope's Promise e-mailed me back within 5 minutes asking for our home study. Here is where the miracles really began.



Normally Social Services does not share very well. :) We called and asked if they would consider sending our home study to the private agency and told them the story. Our worker sent it within the hour.

Two days later we found out that we were chosen for Gavin. We were so excited, but worried that we would have to put him in private foster care for 2 months while background checks were redone. (In Colorado, if you change agencies you have to redo the background checks). God stepped in with yet another miracle. Social Services agreed to let Hope's Promise borrow our home for a few months for us to adopt Gavin. We did not have to redo anything. They shared all of our information just as if we still worked with the county. We brought our sweet baby home a week later ( June 10th). God has been so kind to us. We are still telling everyone our amazing story of miracles and about God giving us not only our needs, but our hearts desires. Thanks so much for the work you do.

I look forward to any thoughts and information any of you may have to share on the issues of parenting and raising our little Gavin. Visual impairment is very new to us so we are just learning how to help him.

Gavin just had a 3rd cataract surgery. Apparently if there is any residual cataract (even microscopic) it can grow back. His glasses are pretty thick and we ordered stronger lenses that will be in soon. The positive is that when he got his glasses he saw his own hand. He spent a minute or 2 examining it. He is smiling now.

We are getting in-home services now from the center for the blind and borrowing some special equipment to help with visual stimulation. Although it is possible he will be much more than legally blind, the brain is amazing and we are just waiting to see and loving him.

Gavin is an amazing joy in our lives and we are praising God daily that He has allowed us to care for this sweet boy.

We do appreciate this opportunity to meet and talk with other families raising special kids. Life has been so busy the last month with his surgery and other appointments I have not been on the NATHHAN website again.

Presently we have 6 additional children besides Gavin (4 others adopted). We have another

little boy who has DiGeorge syndrome and heart defects.

I would love to be listed as a resource parent on your list if anyone is considering adopting a child with DiGeorge.

Thanks again

Stephanie Serff (wife to Ian)

stephanie@serffcreative.com



Wendy and children

**I am 35 years old, and have mild autism, as well as possible Aspergers syndrome.**

With having autism, at times I may say or do things that offend other people or get on their nerves and not even realize it! And a lot of times they are afraid to tell me about it cause they don't want to hurt my feelings.

So rather than just talking with me about it, a lot of times they will just stop hanging around me or having much to do with me. Sometimes it's not just because of me, but also because of my autistic son Walter and his special needs. I've lost a lot of potential friends this way and sometimes it can be really discouraging.

I REALLY want to be friends with people and do things to help them out more. But sometimes it can be so hard for me when the only thing I ever seem to do is drive people away for one reason or another. And it's like the harder I try the worse it gets to the point where I just ask myself, what's the use of even trying anymore?

(Editor's note: We needed to re-print Wendy's e-mail address, as the e-mail was incorrect. She really would love to have some contact. Wendy\_yoho@yahoo.com )

### IMPORTANT!!! Corrected E-Mail Family reaching out for help...

We are NATHHAN members. I have a 7-year old developmentally delayed son that I am homeschooling along with his 4 older siblings. I would love to have someone to talk to about different issues as they come up re: teaching him, IEP forms, etc. If you know of anybody who would be willing to talk to me, I would appreciate it. We have unlimited long distance so I can call them if they want. I'm not looking to spend lots of time on the phone, because I don't have lots of time to spend that way. Just occasional input would be wonderful.

Thanks, Ingar Blount in Kooskia, Idaho  
greenleaf101@gmail.com

.....

### Raising Dustin

(Editor's note: Jo Ann Harder-Lang, Author of Transracial Adoptions, has shared with us an article about her son, Dusty. They did not homeschool him, but wanted to let people know who are facing a pregnancy of a baby with Down syndrome what a blessing this son is to them. Her words are, "I can't tell you how wonderful it has been for our family to have been blessed with raising Dusty. Had we listened to those who offered negative comments we surely would have missed out on a blessing... Dusty.



When I met and married my husband, I came to better understand people with disabilities. I worked in a nursing home and was familiar with caring for various age people and those with various limitations.

What I had not known were people with disabilities living in their family home. I would soon come to learn.

My husband had a younger sister with Down syndrome. The interaction with Becky was much different then what I knew. Becky was personable and had a zest for teasing. Being raised with twelve siblings was definitely a benefit for her. The more I knew her, the more compelled I felt to adopt a

baby with Down syndrome.

On May 18, 1980 Mt St. Helens blew, ash fell everywhere; on our home, our car and on us! We had to wear face masks when ever we went outside. In the mist of the volcano our family welcomed home our five-month-old son, Dustin, who we nicknamed Dusty.

Like his Aunt Becky, Dusty had that zeal for life. He smiled a lot and was content. During the adoption process we heard many negative comments about Down syndrome. Heart problems were number one on the list of many. Next, they can never take care of themselves; it's a lifelong commitment and on the story goes. We chose not to listen. After all, Becky was in the family and thriving. We saw no valid reason not to proceed with our plan to adopt. We had heard there was a need for families to adopt babies with Down syndrome and felt called by God to open our hearts and our home.

Dusty always had a zesty personality and he learned quickly. At eighteen months he was walking well. One day he pushed the kitchen chair over to the sink, climbed up on the chair and turned the water on. He loved water and would take whatever steps necessary to get to it. That proved to be a problem, though, when he started preschool.

We enrolled Dusty (and ourselves) in our local college PRIDE program for infants with Down syndrome where we were taught to help Dusty reach his full potential. There were gross and fine motor concepts and speech we would work on daily at home. At age three the children would go to the public school preschool program. It wasn't long and Dusty would be turning three. I dreaded this new milestone in our lives and knew I needed the Lord's help in adjusting.

Dusty's first day of school was full of excitement, yet it cast an overtone of gloom over me. Although it's been many years ago I can still see Dusty sporting his brown corduroy pants and Ziggy stocking hat. As the bus pulled up to our driveway my heart sank to my feet. The dreaded day was here and I had to let go. Dusty's eyes sparkled with mischief and



his excitement helped subdue my fears for the moment.

The bus driver greeted us with a hearty hello! "Hello there, you must be Dusty!" I answered, "Yes, this is Dusty." We helped get Dusty up the big steps. His stubby legs could not reach but he tried to help us help him. Once in the bus seat all I could see was the Ziggy on top of his hat. I felt the tears welling up inside my body but I maintained. Once the bus pulled away I broke down and sobbed all the way back up to the house. Once I composed myself, I tried to busy myself with household chores but time seemed to drag. As it got nearer to his time to come home, I waited patiently near the mailbox at the end of our long driveway. The frost that had been on the ground when the bus picked Dusty up to go to school was now melted away like my tears. I had asked God to watch over Dusty as he went off to school. I asked for a hedge of protection to guard him in his day.

I felt a sense of joy when I saw the little yellow bus turn the corner and start down our street. Once again I saw Ziggy only this time I saw his face not the back of his head. The bus pulled close and its breaks squeaked as it stopped. The door opened and I could hear Dusty jabbering. Although it was difficult to understand him, you could tell by the tone and speed of his speech if he was happy or upset. This was his happy speech. It was apparent that Dusty enjoyed school as much as I disliked it.

The years passed and Dusty grew into a fine young man. All the concerns of others disappeared. Dusty only had difficulty with recurrent ear infections and did have Eustachian tubes placed twice. Whenever he caught a cold we would start him on Dimetapp right away which helped prevent fluid from forming behind his ears.

We're proud to say that in 1999 Dusty graduated from high school. Through the high school's on-the-job training program known as OJT, Dusty held a job at a nearby Pizza Hut. Today, Dusty lives semi independently in a studio with others with various limitations. He has a job and travels independently

on the bus.

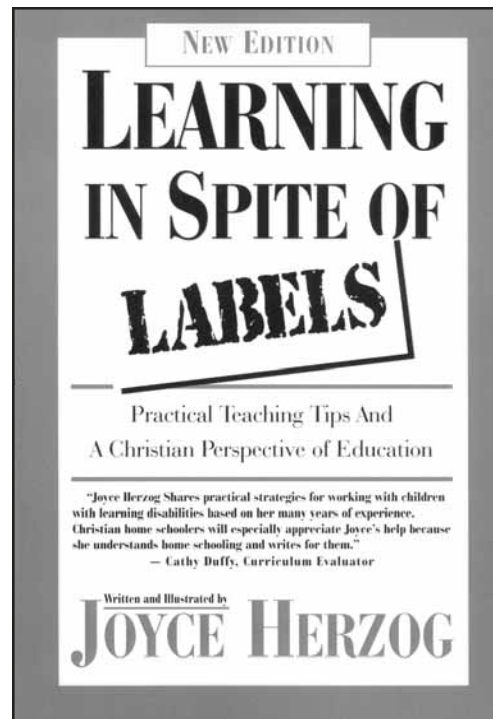
Since Ziggy, I've learned what it means to truly trust God. I trust God with my son's life; after all.....he belongs to God.

As for Becky; she turned 50 years old last year and is doing well.

*Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.* Psalm 37:5  
NLT



Dusty



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## Custody Consent Decree

**A unique legal approach Minnesota law now offers as an alternative to adoption.** (This is not to be considered legal advice.) It is written by a family experienced in adoption in Minnesota.

We would like to tell you about a new and unique legal approach that Minnesota law now offers. It is an alternative to adoption and it is called a custody consent decree. It allows birth (or adoptive) parents to grant custody to another family, without terminating parental rights. It also allows their child to revive benefits that are available to him/her because of his disability. "Adopting" parents have full legal and physical custody of the child, but birth parents would remain connected to him in whatever way is desired.

The adopting family provides for the child's every need, including health insurance, and birth parents (or adoptive) have the legal right to visitation as desired. The document is signed by a judge and it offers an alternative to adoption.

Our son AJ came to our home under a custody consent decree. We have a very good relationship with his birth mother. She did not have to terminate her legal rights but is allowed visitation without worry about taking care of his needs.

We treat AJ as our adopted son and changed his last name to reflect ours so that he will have a strong sense of connection to us. He may be here legally through a custody consent decree, but in every way we treat him as our adopted son. Another benefit of a custody consent decree is that AJ is eligible to receive social security benefits because of his disability. An adoption could potentially end these benefits whereas a custody consent decree will not.

Our family's income is considered a factor when AJ receives these benefits. An adoptive family has to have a low income in order for the child to receive these benefits.

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# Life With Julia

**By Jerri Unruh**

Life with Julia has already consisted of many types of therapies: speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, water therapy, therapy with a dog, vitamin therapy, vision therapy, oxygen therapy, etc. etc. We love working with her, learning how to do therapies with her, figuring out what she really needs and benefits from, how much is too much or not enough, researching, studying, looking ahead at what may come. It has been such a blessing to us. It is just a part of who Julia is and we don't look back. "Hands to the plow". But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62 ASV

Life with Julia has also caused us to invent three new therapies. We hold no patent though, because we are quite sure many of you have the same therapies operating in your homes.

First we have "Hug Therapy". This is when you spend as much time hugging Julia as you possibly can! Having a seizure and neurological disorder has made it so that close physical contact is not always her favorite thing. But, after two years of holding close and hugging she now tolerates much more, even allowing us to rock and hum to her. "Hug Therapy" works two ways: first, the receiver learns to like it and second, the giver gets to enjoy the close, sweet time.

The next therapy is "Grace Therapy". Julia shows grace to us by putting up with our fumbings and mistakes that we may make in caring for her. But, mostly grace is for the parents and caregivers. This is the therapy we are receiving from the Lord as we give of ourselves to love and serve Julia. Some days are tiring, difficult, sad, and hard work. Sometimes outsiders do not understand. Sometimes insiders do not understand! Many days we may hurt for Julia. The grace of God is what sees us through and he is showing us how sufficient His grace is to sustain us, to help us serve, and to help others

understand as we do how much He loves Julia (and them!).

That being said, the last therapy is "Joy Therapy". We like to think it a mutual therapy, although we cannot know for sure. We hope that Julia senses the love and care she receives and that that gives her joy. Thankfully, true joy is not shown by the smile on our face or our day-to-day feelings. Our joy is much deeper, much more than that. It is knowing that underneath you are the everlasting arms! It is knowing that our salvation is by grace, not works--- THANK YOU Jesus! It is knowing that we have reason to hope in an eternal future free of this body of sin and death, where Julia will be whole!

Life with Julia is the therapy God is using to develop real joy in me. I need this therapy every-day....may I suggest you try it?

*(Editor's note: The Unruh family in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, has faithfully served on the NATHHAN / CHASK board for many, many years. They are incredible. They have committed their lives to being a ministry to families with special needs and a support to NATHHAN/ CHASK, particularly the Bushnell family. We appreciate them and want to say a heartfelt THANK YOU!!! for being there for us)*



**The Unruh family**

# Making Do With What Is On Hand



**John & Diane Ryckman**

## By Diane Ryckman

*(Editor's note: John and Diane Ryckman have faithfully served on the NATHHAN / CHASK board for over 9 years. THANK-YOU John and Diane for your generous service to families with special needs!)*

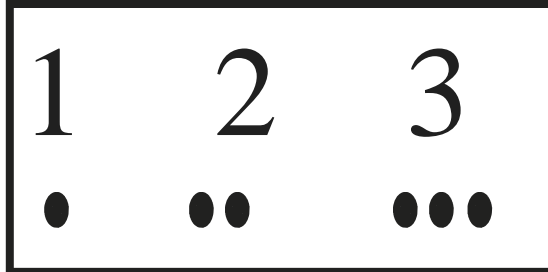
Special needs or not, every child is unique and created by God just the way they are for His purposes and for His glory. It is so important that we as parents not only realize this, but that we help our children to know this, too. As parents, what an awesome responsibility is ours to first lead our children to the Savior and then to equip each one to serve Him, according to their bent and the abilities God has given them. Home schooling can provide a great opportunity for doing just that.

An important aspect of equipping our children involves teaching basic academics and life skills. Though the number of homeschool materials available for teaching children with special needs is growing, it is not always necessary that we invest in expensive curriculum and manipulative. Our homes are often full of lessons just waiting to be discovered and passed on to our children! In order to give you a variety of ideas, I've asked the ladies from our e-mail support group DownHomeLearning to share some of the ways they've taught their children using what they have

around the house. We hope in sharing these ideas with you that they will be not only helpful in themselves, but also a springboard to more ideas for using what you have on hand to teach your child.

**Understanding Numbers** involves not only learning to count from memory (rote counting), but also learning to match a numeral with its name (that 5 says "five"), and learning to match both numeral and name to the number of things it represents (that "three" or "3" means three objects). It is best to teach a child only a few small numbers at first, then once these are mastered go on to the next larger numbers.

Rote counting is the easiest skill to practice around the home. There are so many things to count! My husband John taught Andrew to count by counting stairs. Whenever they walked down the stairs together, John would count, "1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3" until they got to the bottom. Once Andrew was counting these numbers with John, he would then count to 4, later to 5, until they were counting all the steps together.



As Andrew was learning to count, I was thrilled with how easily he seemed to catch on to counting...until I realized that, though he could say the numbers from 1 to 10 in order, he had no idea that "3" meant three things. This was a concept that our older children had figured out on their own, as far as I could remember. I began to realize then that teaching math skills to Andrew might have its challenges! Here is a game I made to help teach number concepts to Andrew.

Make a "game board" out of a piece of construction paper with 3 recipe card size squares glued onto it. On the squares, write the numbers 1 to 3 as well as the corresponding number of dots. Use a different color for each number. (As these numbers are learnt, expand the game board by adding another piece of construction paper with three



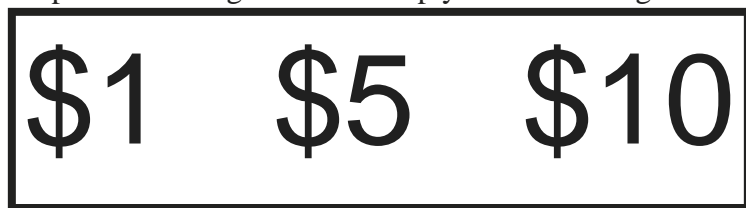
more numbers on it.)

Make a set of number cards, with numbers on one side and corresponding dot patterns on the other. Color-code the dot patterns to match with the colors on the game board, but make the numbers on the cards black.

The games for this board are simple matching ones. Place the number cards above the "game board", then have your child match the numbers. Have him match the dot patterns. As you match numbers or dot patterns, have your child name the numbers. Call the number that you want your child to match. Place the number cards in order. The purpose is to help your child to become familiar with numbers, to recognize number names, to be able to count in order.

Make a second "game board" similar to the first, but with just the dot number patterns on it - still color-coded to match the game cards (I made it on the back of the first boards).

The game for this board is to match the number cards to the dot patterns. Peeking at the colored dot pattern on the back of the card is allowed and encouraged until it is no longer necessary. Another use for the game board is to place counters (buttons, coins, lego, whatever might be fun and interesting for your child) on the dots, counting them as you do. From here you could match counters to the number cards without the dot patterns to guide, though allowing peeking on the back as necessary. The purpose of these games is to help your child recognize



that numbers represent specific amounts.

Money skills can most effectively be taught using real money, and the first money skill to teach would be coin recognition. Children need to learn the names of the coins (penny, nickel, dime, quarter, etc.) as well as their value. This could be done as a matching game similar to the one described above, but with the child matching a coin to a card with the name of the coin, or to a card with the value of the coin on it.

Once a child learns to recognize coins, there are all sorts of ways to teach the value and use of money. Here are a number of ideas.



**Carol and Naomi (2 1/2 yrs) Kurlowich**

**From Linda:** "Giving our guys (14 and 16 with Down syndrome) a quarter for doing a chore has really helped motivate them, as well as begun to teach them the value and use of money. They put the coins in a jelly jar with their name on it. Coins (pennies...) can also be given for completing a task, doing schoolwork with a good attitude...whatever needs some positive reinforcement. At the end of the week or any chosen day, count up the money together. (Separating money involves sorting, another good skill.) I outlined 4 quarters on a 4X6 card and put = dollar (drawn dollar). Like this: O O O O = (drawn dollar). They put the quarters in the spots and I trade a dollar for them. Once they've got that down, I'll make up another card for another coin. Our guys like to save their money up for pop at the movies. Whatever your child likes, he can save for it."

**From Anne Marie:** "The way we have worked on money at our house (after the initial coin recognition, of course) is to make a poster of favorite snacks and put a price on them. We keep coins in the kitchen so at snack time, the children can "buy" their item of choice. This can start out with you counting out the money with them and with practice, move on to them being able to use different combinations to make a particular amount, etc. In other words, it can grow with your child's knowledge. At our house, we try to find ways to incorporate learning into our everyday activities, as "one-on-one" time can be

limited during a day. This is one way we have been able to do that.”

**From Barbara:** “Here is an idea for teaching money with the manipulatives from Math-u-see or I suppose other rod type manipulatives. First I get a 100 units bar and show that 100 units represents 100 pennies and 100 pennies is equal to one dollar. I put an elastic around two 10 unit bars and a five unit bar to make 25 units (one quarter). If I do that four times then I have 100 units that fit together to show how four quarters makes a dollar.

One quarter added to one quarter is half of a dollar and so on. If I keep the actual coins beside the corresponding manipulatives it makes it easier for Nathan (18 with Down syndrome) to link the two together. We use the 10 bar for dimes and the 5 bar for nickels and the unit for pennies. We have also been able to use this method for making change. He can see that if something costs \$.56 and he is given a dollar then he can see that there are 46 units left uncovered and that would be how much change is to be given back. It seems to make the very difficult concept of money (for Nathan anyway) much more concrete.”

**Telling Time** can be taught using a cheap alarm clock with hands that are easy to set.

**From Judy:** “I refer to a clock in something that matters to him, such as “You can watch the video when the big hand is on the 3.” I don’t make it too long a time for him to wait, and have to keep on with things like, “Look, the big hand is on the 2, it’s almost on the 3.” At other times we point to the numbers and say what they are, discuss the big hand and little hand, etc. I bought a Judy clock to use with Simon (a treat, since he would use it for so long), but with all the other kids made one out of a paper plate. I put an inexpensive clock on his bedroom wall.



**Sabrina Carper (at age 3) counting green beans**

With Simon’s older siblings I would say they could come out from their nap when the big hand went all the way around from the number it was on, back to the same number. In this way a lot is accomplished at one time.... learning numbers, awareness of time, back and forth conversation, teaching him how to wait patiently.

**Addition and subtraction** can be taught once numbers and counting are mastered. Often memorizing addition or subtraction facts can be difficult if not impossible, but the important thing is that the concepts of addition and subtraction are understood. Once your child knows what addition is about, teaching the use of a calculator is a practical alternative to drilling math facts.

**From Annette:** “One thing we’ve done that helps is using an abacus when adding and subtracting. That way the manipulatives are all in a line, and Jessica seems to count them better than a pile of little manipulative toys. (However, when she was littler, she could not have used it because she didn’t have enough dexterity to.)”

### **Multiplication and division ideas**

**From Becky:** “Use a muffin tin and some beans to teach multiplication and division. Talk about multiplication by counting out “3 rows of 4 = 12” when baking chicken nuggets, muffins, cookies, etc.”

**Measurement** can be taught using a ruler/yardstick/tape measure to measure things around the house.

**Calendar Skills** can be taught by using a calendar and daily marking off each day, reviewing the day of the week and the month of the year daily as well.

**Alphabet recognition** can be taught by reading a simple alphabet book daily to your child. Each time you “read” the book, read it in the same way, pointing to the letter, saying its name and sound (“A says ah, ah,

ah”), pointing to a picture, naming it slowly by breaking it into syllables then repeating it normally (“a – ple, apple”). As you read, do not expect any response from your child, but just provide lots of input. Do this daily for as long as necessary until your child begins recognizing the letter sounds and “reading” them with you.

**Reading comprehension.** Choose a book and read that same book each day for a week or more. Pre-read the book and pick out information or picture details that you would like to impress upon your child. As you read the book together, daily point out what you’d like your child to learn. Have your child answer questions about the story only after first giving her the answers.

This is also a great way to **Teach the Bible** to your children. When Andrew was little, I was teaching a teen class on the book of Revelation. With 8 children at home at the time, including a baby, I had very little of my own time to prepare. In preparation would I daily read out loud the chapter we were studying in order to be familiar with it. I read out loud for my benefit, but it had lasting repercussions. Though I didn’t require the children to listen to my reading, they did, and the book of Revelation is still one of Andrew’s favorite books of the Bible, and he knows it well.

**Sight words** can be taught by making your own sight word flash cards. Choose words your child is familiar with - names of family members are a great place to start! These can be matched to individual photos of each family member.

**From Becky:** “We made our own reading sight word flash cards with index cards and markers, then put them on the things they name - chair, table, refrigerator, etc.”

**From Judy:** “We are also using homemade index cards for learning sight words. We keep our flashcards handy (such as on the table where we eat meals), trying to work with them for a 15 minute session every day. We’ll sit at a table or on the floor, putting down one word at a time and reading them together. The ones he knows well, he will say right away; if he hesitates I just read it and he says it along with me. The repetition helps him memorize them. If there’s a word he keeps getting stuck on, I will have a couple copies of it and keep them out in the open, playing with them through-

out the day, reading them together with him.

Other things to do with flashcards, I line words up to make little sentences and we act some out after reading them (like “Mom hug Simon”, or “Simon tickle Caleb”).

We have played a game with them, which Simon actually made up: he laid some words out on the floor and others in the room would say, “Give me \_\_\_\_\_”. He’d pick up that word and hand it to the person. We, of course, would make a big deal about the words he could read.

Sight word booklets can be made of words that are similar. Some ideas are a booklet of familiar animal words, with one animal word on a page and a picture of the animal on the next page; a booklet of body parts; a booklet of familiar action words. Pictures for the booklets are optional, and can be cut out from magazines, hand drawn, or from photographs. Again, read the booklet together without expecting a response from your child, but read it frequently. Soon your child will begin to read it



**Carol (mom) and Naomi Kurlowich learning ABC’s**

with you. Booklets containing similar sentences repeated throughout can be helpful especially for teaching more abstract words like “this” and “is”. “This is a cat...” Combining booklets and flashcards is a great way to reinforce learning.

**From Judy:** “We began teaching sight words with family members’ names and a few verbs that could make sentences, like “hug Mom” and “I see Bev”. I made a little book with a photo of a family member on each page with a sentence below it.. “I see \_\_\_\_\_.” I’m making his next book, about body parts.... “This is my \_\_\_\_\_.” It has line drawings with a marker, plain white

pages stapled together.

**Speech** can be encouraged as well by using booklets. Often children will leave out words or form sentences incorrectly when learning to speak. By making booklets of phrases your child is learning and reading them together, you model proper speech for your child and give him a visual reminder of the words he needs to use. With Andrew we made an “I am...(hungry; tired; happy; etc)” booklet to correct his habit of saying “My hungry...”

**Interaction/Communication.** It is important that we make time to work at developing our relationships with our children, especially if they find it difficult to communicate or tend to spend time “in their own little world”. Here are some suggestions for relationship building.

**From Annette:** “Sometimes trying to just be silly can make a big difference in getting a child ‘on your level’. Sometimes just acting like the child can get them laughing and interact with you more. Sometimes when my daughter is in a bad mood, I just start tickling her or hug her sweetly, whichever I feel would be more effective. Children with DS love to be accepted, included, and loved just as much as any other child. Sometimes we have to initiate it more because they don’t know how or are ‘off in their own little world’ and need some intervention. The benefits of trying hard to break into that little world and show the child how much you love to spend time with them and love them – it will make all the difference in the world.”

**From Linda:** “Working on taking turns is so important. If our kids don't learn how to do that, they'll have a hard time developing relationships with people. Start really slow...try imitating what your child does, wait for him to do something, and then imitate him again with either sounds or actions. That's a good way to start taking turns in a fun way. See how long you can keep him taking turns with you. Don't force him to stay with you, but try to keep him with you for one turn longer than the time before. If your child is still in a world of "now", concentrate on talking about things you and he are presently doing. Our Jonathan (14) has just started understanding tomorrow and yesterday

this past year. He still has trouble talking about things of the past, but that's OK since we meet him where's he's at and focus on giving him successes as far as that goes.”

### **Safety signs**

**From Annette:** “Put safety signs around the house when teaching them to your child – like ‘no swimming’ by the bathtub (Jessi always cracked up at that one)” **Fine motor skills/pre-handwriting.**

**From Diane:** “Before Andrew began learning to print we had him do a lot of coloring. Sometimes I would color with him to encourage him to get started, and later to model staying within the lines. Andrew loved to color (still does at 13 – and does an amazing job of putting colors together!) so it was not hard to encourage this skill. By the time he was able to keep within the lines, his fine motor skills were developed enough so that he was ready to learn to print.”

**From Annette:** “We saw a definite improvement in her fine motor skills. She can put puzzles together independently, string beads, build with Mega Bloks and various other media. She also practiced drawing almost daily to increase her fine motor tone.”

Use a black board or white erase board to practice circles (big and little ones) and later to practice letters.

**Teaching responsibility.** An important aspect of preparing our children for life is teaching them to do chores. But how do we know our child is ready for responsibility?

**From Annette:** “It depends first on the physical abilities, and then the cognitive abilities. What can seem like a daunting task for a child with DS can be taught a little at a time. For example, to teach a child to sweep, you first do everything and then have the child with DS hold the dustpan and learn the task of putting the dirt into the trashcan. Once that skill is learned, then you teach a little bit at a time how to sweep a room until eventually the child can do it on his own with minimal assistance. Sometimes it is really good if a child with DS can see another sibling do a chore for a year,

and then they get excited when they get the job the next year. They have observed how to do it, and then you have to go along with them to help them.

You never know how much a child can do until you try. We were totally amazed when our daughter (now 14) learned to take out the trash and put in a new liner in the can in record time. She has since taken ownership of that job and brings the garbage cans back from the street after garbage day if she sees them there when she takes out the garbage. (Of course, that wouldn't have been ok when she was younger and not trusted to go outside of the gate.) We sometimes have to adjust too – for instance, we learned to rent



**Georgia Hyler learning responsibility in the boat**

one of those big garbage cans with a hinged lid so that she would always have to put the lid down when finished. Otherwise, the dogs were getting into the garbage, and she didn't always put on the lid. In our home, we have chores that we give each child according to age that they do. As they increase in skill, they get to graduate to the next class of chores. They enjoy getting to 'graduate' and switch with another sibling each year."

Judy has taught Simon to do chores by giving him a little part of a chore, having him do it alongside someone else, then gradually reducing the help and letting him do more of it. "I tell his older siblings that if they can mentor him into a new chore, they'll be able to pass it on to him eventually...a little motivation for them! I've been surprised at what my son is able to do. Sometimes someone expects more than I do of him in an area, and he rises to the challenge. Gotta keep trying new things, giving him opportunity to try new things. Having other people involved helps (relatives, friends), as well as my trying to think of what new we might try."

**From Sheri:** "How do we know our child is ready for responsibility? When they start to volunteer to do them! Beth and Ezra are visually tuned in and know the routines of our household. Even though we don't keep a very good schedule, they do know that before we can eat, the table must be clean and set and after a meal, the dishes need to be cleared and the table cleared. They know what things we put on bread for lunch and they will get those things out without anyone asking them to do so.

**From Colleen:** "Even at a very young age, I see Nate (5 with DS) desiring to be a contributing part of the family and developing many independent self-help skills. Yet, he seems to have his own priorities. There are many things I don't realize he can do, until he shows me. For example, he will not put on his own clothes, yet has started putting on other people's clothes. Maybe it is easier to put on bigger sizes? I didn't know he could pull up his pants--I thought his little hands were weak. Then one day I tried to spank him and learned he could not only pull up his pants, but his little hands were pretty strong and good at pulling up pants when the motivation was not to get a spanking. Funny!"

Here are some examples of **chores that teach responsibility** – among other things!  
**From Annette:** "Our daughter with DS is 14 ½ and she takes out the garbage, sweeps the bathroom (with reminders and assistance), gives dogs water daily, empties the dishwasher (always after washing hands), makes her bed, and brushes her teeth and hair. This routine is the same every day before breakfast, and she knows that these things need to be part of her morning routine, and then she can make herself some cereal and sit down to eat. She has gotten it down pretty well now and sometimes will even wake up before everyone else, do her chart, eat, and then have fun watching something on television before everyone else wakes up!"

**From Judy:** "Working alongside Simon, we've taught him bit by bit to empty the dishwasher. He has gradually worked up to being able to do the whole job with very little prompting from us. It involves matching sizes and shapes (of plates, silverware, etc), names of the items, counting, sorting, organizing. Also "PT" as he carries an item and places it in the appropriate place--he has balance issues. I have the plates and cups in a low



**Naomi Kurlowich feeding her big bunny**

cupboard he can reach, and he pulls a chair over to put silverware in the drawer. He also gets to serve the family by doing this chore, and it's a life skill. As he learns to be thorough, it's preparation for having a job someday. We've just begun having him help to set the table. This can involve counting people and getting that many plates, forks, etc. Again, this is life skill, math, service."

### **What do we do if they repeatedly fail or balk?**

**From Annette:** "When my daughter (14 with DS) gets real stubborn and doesn't want to do something I've asked her to do, I've learned a valuable tool that I read about in a book on Down Syndrome. If I get her to do a small thing first (like a high-five or a hug or tell her I have a drink for her), she is more readily willing to do the next command. There is something helpful about getting her to think about cooperating, especially when she doesn't want to. If I first ask her something simple, it's easier for her to acknowledge that and then graduate to a more difficult task – like doing her chores.

When a child repeatedly fails at a task, it is likely best that the task be changed to something different. Sometimes it means that math doesn't get done that day. That's ok. You can try to make it up the next day. Sometimes it's just best to go to the next task and tackle that one again later. If we continue to push on one particular task that the child is struggling with, it will make them hate it and become more belligerent.

Another idea for a repetitive problem is to use a reward system. When our daughter was having a tremendous difficulty with understanding a math concept without balking, we'd pull out the chocolate chips and encourage her that she could have one when one prob-

lem was completed. Chocolate chips are tiny, but they are a goal worth working for! Raisins, marshmallows, cheerios – all work well too – whatever motivates the child."

**From Linda:** "For a couple of years I've struggled with getting our 14-year-old with DS ready for the day. Some days he just doesn't want to move. Using a kitchen timer the last couple of weeks has worked wonders. I set it outside his door and set it for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how long a task should take. (He uses a small picture album with photographs of what he is to do.) We time those activities and if he beats the timer the majority of the times, I give him a little sticker on a chart in his photo album. It's amazing how he will work for stickers, too. Changing my approach around and giving him positive rewards, along with the timer has brightened our mornings. Hopefully one day I'll be able to wean him from the timer and he'll do it on his own."

**From Annette:** "Losing one's temper never works. Then you lose control, and nobody wins. However, if you remain controlled and handle the situation as quickly and effectively as possible, then you can discuss or model the correct behaviors later when the child is ready to listen. We've noticed that when we get all upset at our daughter with DS, she will just retreat into her shell and block out whatever it is we're trying to tell her. Instead of getting upset, we decide if she needs quick punishment, space (sent to her room), or whatever, then when time has passed restitution and talking to her about the problem helps."

God is good, gracious and compassionate, abounding in mercy, slow to anger. As we train our children to serve Him, may He grant us the grace to be like Him in our relationships with each of the children He's entrusted to our care.



# Developing Daily Routines for our Children with Disability

By Sherry Bushnell

Many children thrive on daily working through a routine. Not only do they know what is expected of them, but they learn valuable skills necessary for the future as adults. A child who has a purpose each day, and is considered an important part of the day, will feel respected and needed. (We all need to feel needed and respected.)

A child able to successfully perform a routine involves being able to do a sequence of activities in the proper order, with no prompting from anyone.

The first step involves sitting down and making a thorough list of the jobs that need to be done to complete a routine. As we identify each separate skill, and then each separate step in the skill, we then make a list of the materials needed to perform it. You may need to use pictures of the materials instead of words.

Let's use cleaning a room as an example.

Step	Materials
Empty waste basket	Where is it emptied? Do we replace the bag? Where? A shelf, a basket?
Move small breakable items to a safe place out of the way	(window cleaner - how much, paper towel)
Wash windows	Broom, dust pan, garbage can for sweepings collected.
Using a broom Sweep floor and rug, and let the dust settle	Dust cloth, damp wash cloth, cleaning products if needed
Dust (Do higher places first. For example, do window ledges and pictures before the baseboards)	Mop, water or getting mop wet
Mop the floor	Vacuum cleaner
Vacuuming: Get items too big to suck up with the vacuum cleaner off the floor.	
Move furniture out of the way Replace furniture after vacuuming	

Each skill does not need to be done each time, but starting with one skill, even one or two steps of an individual skill, may be most appropriate. As these are mastered, add more steps and skills.

Eventually you can fade yourself out of the project, as they learn to spot mistakes and become proficient.

Remember, the key to moving through a routine, is that each step of the routine becomes a signal for the next step to occur. At first you will need to help with the signal (What do you do next now?")

Teach him or her to come tell you when he has completed the task, so that both of you can review his progress. He can evaluate his own performance, mark the chart himself, and check it to find the next step in the routine. In time, he / she will be able to clean the room without looking at the chart at all.

**Remember Rewards:** As you review the chart steps for each skill with your child, help him to focus on that specific skill and to "check off" so he can learn to evaluate his performance by himself. Immediate praise, little prizes, and encouragement go a long way in keeping the "want-to" flowing. In fact, call other family members in to see what an awesome job he/she just did!

When trouble shooting a problem or a skill that is not completed correctly, take the child to the center of the room and say, "Something's wrong, can you find it?" or "Something is not finished yet, can you see it?"

As needed, point or show the areas or objects involved in the search. Show him or her how to investigate an area for missing steps.

A chart with drawings or easy words with nice check boxes placed in a prominent area in the room allows them to review and stay in sequential order. It also helps to turn off the radio, TV or distraction. Consider ushering everyone out of the room that would potentially distract, to avoid misplacing the focus on the task at hand.

Teaching skills to our children with special needs is a wonderful way to help them feel like an important part of the household. No one really just wants a free ride after a while. Being a help means being engaged with surroundings and supporting the people they love to be with.

# Learning Disabilities and the Visual/Kinesthetic Approach

**By Sharon Jeffus**

When I began to compose my ideas for this article, I typed in the word “Special” and went to this wonderful poem found at this web address:

<http://gyanguru.org/meaning-of-word-special>

## “Special”

is a word  
that is used to describe  
something one-of-a-kind  
like a hug  
or a sunset  
or a person who spreads love  
with a smile or kind gesture.

Reading this poem made me realize just how precious and special all the children I have worked with are. In writing my books, I always have a deep sense of how special each child is.

My own son had a severe visual problem. Although his sight was not good, I was able to work with him using a visual and kinesthetic approach very successfully. Doctors said he would never be able to drive and would have to go to a special school for the blind. This never happened.

In my experience in working with “Special Needs” children, I find that they respond well to the visual and kinesthetic approach to learning. They also respond well to encouragement. Each small success builds on the previous small success.

Because of the large variety of diagnoses under the “Special Needs” umbrella, the process of learning tech-

niques and vocabulary and then having a result that is something that belongs only to them is very important. Especially in this area, curriculum that encourages success and is graded in an individual way is so important for the children. Failure is never viewed as failure, but only as an opportunity for learning and doing it better the next time. Our multi-sensory and hands-on approach is very successful for the preschool or early elementary mentality, as well as for older children who may be dyslexic.

Because all children with disabilities perceive the world a little differently, allowing them to use the multi-sensory approach is very important. Terri Mauro, “(<http://specialchildren.about.com/bio/Terri-Mauro-13624.htm>), when speaking about behavior problems in an article called, “What are Special Needs,” says *...parents need to be flexible and creative*. Visual Manna allows parents to do just that and approach academics in a flexible and creative way.

She also says, “Children with learning disabilities like dyslexia and Central Auditory Processing Disorder struggle with schoolwork regardless of their intellectual abilities. They require specialized learning strategies to meet their potential and to avoid self-esteem problems and behavioral difficulties.”

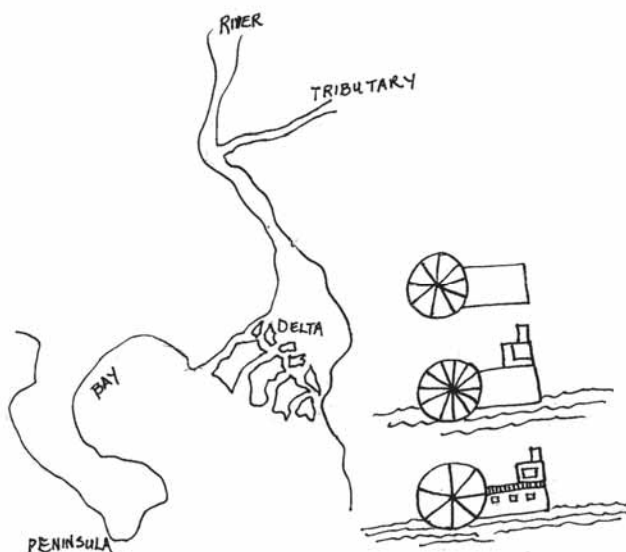
With our materials, parents/teachers have a multitude of choices for lessons that would teach required subjects in a unique and creative way. When learning fractions, sometimes breaking a chocolate bar into parts and then learning how to break a whole into twelve pieces is very successful. Folding an origami chair and learning how to fold the paper into nine pieces and then building the chair into a



throne is another approach to learning fractions...or making a triptych and counting the parts, or how about learning about dehydration by making a necklace out of potato pieces?

Especially with children who have learning disabilities, learning by doing is an alternative method from the traditional approach to achieve success. Our projects are given on two levels; one for older children with more developed fine motor skills, and then projects for children who are preschool and do not have motor skills that are developed.

Our “Art Through the Core” package includes Teaching English, Science, Social Studies, History, American History and Math in unique and hands-on ways. In American History through Art, we look at a picture by George Caleb Bingham of life on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and then do an art project about it.



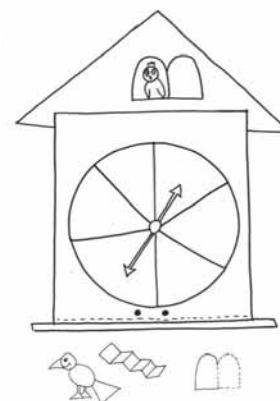
Discussing master works of art in a simple way is good for retention of facts. If children do not get bored, they will always remember the picture and the project. Questions like “What is the center of interest? What do you look at first? Where is the horizon line? Where do you see a pattern? What do you think the animal in the

boat is?” stimulate thought processes and then doing a project about the picture helps children remember. I do a treasure map teaching terms about an island such as inlet, coast, etc. while looking at the artist Rousseau’s tropical paintings.



The picture above is “Fur Traders Descending the Missouri” by George Caleb Bingham. He illustrated life on the Missouri and Mississippi while Mark Twain was writing about it with stories of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

The project below is about telling time. Children can make the clock face as a color wheel, and then they can make a bird pop out of the clock. They can use the flamingo they have drawn (shown on the next page) for the bird. Telling time is a basic math skill, so I always tell the children we are making an “It’s time to say I love you clock.” They can decide which time they want it to be after they have listened to you present how to tell time.



You can purchase round stickers and children can put them in the right position as you are teaching them the numbers. On the clock on the left, you can have them color the face as a color wheel and then teach them the numbers.

The Artsy Animal series is a multi-sensory approach to learning designed to produce a finished project that teaches core subjects by hands-on art activities.

Sharon Jeffus teaches internet lessons that encourage and delight children needing to learn fine motor skills, or needing encouragement in learning core basics. You can get our power point on teaching preschool children sent via email for free.

We also have an “Art through the Core” package for older children. You can teach all the core subjects through hands-on projects that delight and inspire children. You can have all these books on CD plus 5 internet lessons for \$125.00.

A sample of a project that we might do begins like this after we would look at a picture of Audubon’s “Pink Flamingo” :



We would talk about kinds of lines. Drawings would be very simple. We might cut some blue paper for water and put it on the picture. We would mention colors. We might put a color wheel rainbow on the picture. We would talk about a bird’s habitat. Children could put a fish in the mouth of the flamingo. In English, children can draw the four kinds of sentences using a cartoon format. They can retain knowledge better by doing. If you as a parent think about baking a

cake, how much do you remember if you just read a recipe, as opposed to seeing it baked on a video? How much do you remember if you actually bake the cake?



DECLARATIVE



EXCLAMATORY



INTERROGATIVE



IMPERATIVE

Websites are included in lessons for further study. Samples are not so complex that children get discouraged trying to come up to a coloring book’s standard.

In conclusion, learning disabilities become “possibilities” when students truly enjoy what they are learning by hands-on projects and delightful visual images. Visual Manna does just that.

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# Married... With Extra “Challenges”

By Tom and Sherry Bushnell

We are writing this article in all meekness, not as a couple that has it all together, but in an effort to share our hearts about being married... and having special needs children.

There is a wonderful blessing for those who have chosen to hang in there with each other, after navigating through disasters. Statistics show that the divorce rate is higher among families who are dealing with special needs.

We well remember our first taste of this when our daughter was born with Down syndrome back in 1987. One of the first things they recommended was genetic testing, to see which one of us was at “fault” (or both of us) and to determine our “risk” for having more children with Down syndrome. Back then we did not know very much, but we did know enough to say, “No, thanks!” Leaving Tally in her grave after open heart surgery was bad enough, but to medically find the “blame” was out of the question.

After a few weeks, after the funeral, after the burial, after the meals, the cards, the packing away of her clothing and all the initial attention we received from our church family, the dust settled. We sat looking at each other and found a distance between us that we did not understand at the time.

Back in December of ‘81, we were married at ages 19 and 18. Tally died when Tom was 26 and Sherry was 24. While Sherry was pregnant with Tally (and she died), we were “homesteading”. We were living in a barn, on lots of acreage, producing our own food. We had animals and a big garden. Tally’s home birth with a wonderful midwife, and her subsequent open heart surgery and then passing to heaven in the big city hospital, caused us to grow up in our marriage... However, as a way of preserving our hearts from further pain, we noticed a pulling away from each other. Even from others who we knew cared about us.

We had 2 precious boys, 5 and 3. We loved them very dearly... but our daughter was gone. We found that as a married couple, we responded to grief very differently. Tom tended to become VERY



Tom and Sherry Bushnell 1981

absorbed with chess... mentally checking out to avoid having to deal with the deep hurt of letting go. Sherry became angry at God, stopped eating very much and became desperate to fill that empty spot Tally’s home-going had left.

Over time (years) we learned to give each other space. We still shared just about everything. But we realized that we were individuals who needed room to be ourselves, both spiritually and in different interests. Yet we were afraid to launch out.

**Sherry:** I think we had a normal reaction to hurt and grief. We were trying so hard in our own strength to be strong. We resolved to keep going... but certain parts of ourselves we kept hidden. It was too painful to let go.

There are healthy steps in the healing process that we all go through. God designed us that way. We just all navigate them differently.

Parents dealing with disability grieve too. Even if a child has a learning disability, the loss of parental expectations, dreams and goals for their child must eventually be replaced with reality. This means new expectations, visions and dreams. We all adjust to the disappointments in life over time.

Our first taste of dealing with grief in any way, was in dealing with Tally’s disability. For a short while, I was in denial. I was sure

that the diagnosis was a mistake. In my dreams everything was fine. But her weakness and obvious signs of Down syndrome put us in the acceptance camp pretty quickly. Eventually, we were actually happy about the Down syndrome. I had worked in special education in high school. We became completely enamored with the whole idea of having one of our very own!

Then she died. Anger soon took root in my heart. Anger at our loss, the finality of death, the loss of the beautiful idea of raising a sweet little girl with Down syndrome. It was time to grow up....time to deal with our raw grief.

I am sorry to say that I stayed in that anger camp for way too long. Years. But I did. 6 months after Tally died, God brought little baby Jordan, with Down syndrome, into my life. I poured all that love and nurture, pent up inside, denied for a time, into this frail tiny little baby boy. He grew and flourished but I began to see that even precious little Jordan could not fill the gaping hole of Tally's loss in my heart. With calm assurance, steadily though, God was allowing a new little flower to grow beside the dark, empty hole.

I still needed to deal with my anger. I remember staring out the window at the rolling, treeless hills on a long car trip, realizing just how angry I was, and how my frustration was affecting my husband. I was withholding my heart from him and he knew it. I just wasn't sure how to let go of the strong emotions that separated me from God and Tom.

It all boiled down to total acceptance of what God was doing in my life, for better or worse. Once I released my life and became totally broken in my heart before the Lord (maybe then I became submitted to Him for the first time), I was able to walk with my hand in God's hand, giving my husband my heart, instead of marching faithfully, but stoically beside him.

Moving on a few years later, still working through life lickity-split... after we had adopted Jordan, we had 8 miscarriages one after the other after.

How could a loving God give me a special baby, take her away, and then turn my body into a device for populating heaven with unborn babies?!

In my heart I carried shame. My baby died. Now I could not carry a pregnancy.

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Our commitment at the beginning of our marriage and allowing the Lord to plan our family, was becoming hard to follow through with. This path was not adding up to what we had dreamed. I didn't want the option of "no more children." Could we honestly trust in His plan, His way?

**Tom:** We gave up trying to carry a pregnancy, decided to adopt. But God had an additional path. After coming back from India with our newly adopted 21-month-old daughter, Sheela, Sherry became pregnant. With the help of a fertility specialist, she stayed that way 9 months. Zack

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was born. After that, the Lord blessed us with 5 more children, each spaced about 2 years apart, and no more miscarriages until much later.

We adopted one more girl from India. By now we had 5 in diapers, with teens on the horizon. Guess that would qualify as busy.

Looking back through our marriage and family life, only the Lord knew what it would take for us to understand with true compassion the needs of the families we would be ministering to. Our life work, NATHHAN / CHASK, would require a huge amount of understanding that only experience brings. Grief affects a marriage. Ours was no exception.

In 1990, the first thing we did to ease Sherry's stress load was that I came home to work for NATHHAN full time. NATHHAN had grown very fast from being Sherry's "hobby" into an important part of the special needs homeschooling community. Another huge thing for Mommy, after I came home to work, was that we made the switch to paper diapers. Yup, 5 in diapers was more than my male mind could comprehend... or was it the swishing in the toilet with the cloth variety that put me over the edge. I'll never know, but

disposable was in for good.

Our struggling non-profit with more directions to go than funds, made life interesting and stressful at the same time. We honestly

learned to to-

tally rely on the Lord for our very food, clothes and direction. We can truly testify that He has never failed us once.

Over the years we found our busyness creating more challenges to our marriage. We worked well together as team. We could work the socks off other smaller non-profit organizations, with our combined skills.



**Life got tougher**

Over the next 15 years we traveled across the country and spent more time with the children, with friends, with church family, many new friends, relatives and lots of others, than with each other.

**Tom and Sherry:** I guess our highest recommendation for married couples working through grief and maintaining a positive relationship, is make sure both husband and wife are totally submitted to the Lord in EVERYTHING. This means the little areas and the bigger ones. It is one thing to lean on Him when disaster strikes, but can be just as much of a challenge with something as simple as physical intimacy. Rejection in this area is painful for husbands. Just as equally, emotional withholding or physical and verbal abuse from a husband towards his wife, hurts her deeply.

Bitterness is the enemy. Be patient. Allow time for communication.... Scratch that... MAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER.

In our marriage, presently this translates into a weekly date and every other month or so leaving the home to spend the night somewhere without teen drama, the phone, "urgent" messages, meals, laundry, kids scrapping and so forth.

We don't always have money to spend on a dinner in a restaurant. Honestly our favorite times over the last few years have been with our cheap little BBQ set beside the river or in the mountains. We have been driven back into the car by hordes of mosquitoes and have gotten stuck in the snow, but these are all part of our dinner adventures. And they are OUR dinner adventures. These memories are precious to us as a married couple.

What do we talk about? There have been times we have resolved not to talk about children, or work, but just us. We have to choose to do that. Sometimes we just sit there and if there is hurt in our hearts, it is hard to talk. At times it might take us almost all the evening to break through the wall of frustration or hurt, before the real issues can be talked about.

Exhaustion, emotional and physical, play a huge role in the health of a relationship. Finding time to get rest or step back and take a breath of fresh air (ie doing something different for a

few days) can help put a situation into clearer focus. If communication is difficult because of built up bitterness or hurt or anger, finding a counselor that you can trust can be a big help in getting you started in a better direction.

**For New Moms:** Postpartum depression can put an even darker cloud over a very sad or heart-breaking situation. Postpartum depression can settle in anytime after birth, up to 6 months or more. If there is any chance at all that your body is having a hard time adjusting to after-pregnancy hormonal levels, please don't hesitate to contact your doctor or midwife and pursue this avenue. This alone can give you a better outlook on your marriage and a situation regarding your child that is hard on-going.



### Suggestions from Sherry for wives:

Back when Tom and I were much younger and after our dear Tally had gone to heaven for a few years, we began to see that reaching out to find personal interests beyond our safe little box wasn't so bad (or scary). A new direction helped me to get my focus off my sorrow and gave us new

things to talk about (besides our pain).

So, if you like higher level schooling, working with people in a ministry setting like visiting the elderly, my suggestion is spell each other with baby-sitting or hire a sitter for a few hours. Find an interest that you can financially afford and will keep you looking forward to doing it again. How about your husband? Does he like to work out at the gym? Is there a Bible study course he would like to take?

Confession: I think that one of the hardest things for me to do, was to let go of my husband. I kept an emotional tight grip on him because I was afraid he would get into an accident (more grief), find someone more lovely than I to care for. (I was slightly grumpy and concerned about chasing him away....?) I was afraid he would leave me alone to care for the

whole sad package by myself... the silly list went on.

If any of you know Tom, he is definitely a stick-around type of guy. Leaving me was the last thing on his mind. And sorrowfully, the harder I held on, the more uncomfortable he became.

After a difficult situation in our marriage surfaced, I needed to face things that needed to change in my heart. What did it take for me to relax and trust? First I had to heal enough, with God's help, to trust my husband's love. It took soul searching and daily prayer/ Bible study. Tom worked overtime, to reassure me of his love. I also had to choose to forgive.

To me forgiving meant having faith that God has a bigger plan. Letting go means I had to get my eyes off myself and my "special needs" (as in my own buried grief over the years, my own fear and pain of failure.) And most importantly, forgiving means letting God be the Holy Spirit in my husband's heart, instead of me.

Next I had to work at becoming the godly woman that I was interested in being. This included some new interests and a dedication to physically and emotionally *being there* for my husband. This is what worked for me.

As wives, I think that we might sometimes underestimate the influence of our love on our husbands. In prayer, we can stay open to the needs of our man, if we will stay in tune with the Lord... EVERY DAY.

Respect for our husband is also another way of respecting God. Nothing tromps on Tom's heart more than my belittling, sassy attitude. Yup, using a degrading tone of voice or comments to motivate him got results, but not favorable ones. Our husbands are just as we view them as in our eyes. If we are condemning, perhaps we will see a "whipped puppy" instead of the strong tower we wish him to be. Treating our husbands just like the man and leader we want them to be is a huge step in our husbands' growing into the man of God he was meant to be all along.

**Tom's suggestion for husbands:** Make



sure you take the time to really listen with your whole heart to your wife. So many times we feel side-tracked or tired from working and we just “sort of” pay attention. It’s not that we mean to ignore, it’s just that we are already on overload and more piled on can be that “straw-that-broke-the-camel’s-back” so to speak.

Choose to make time, just the two of you. You initiate it, even if she expresses doubts. Make sure the children are well cared for. Sit down and really look her in the eyes with understanding. Share her deep-felt concerns. Do more than nod. Ask questions in a supportive way (not firing them one after the other) and even write down what she is saying so you can get a grip on the important issue. (Don’t doodle as she talks!)

Be a supporter of her role as keeper of the home. If you do make time for a special few days, don’t pressure for physical intimacy unless you are very sure she is well enough emotionally to share herself with you. If your wife is grieving, having sex may just be that... “having sex” and nothing more. That alone can be hurtful for her if just you are having a great time and she is mourning.

If you are not Mr. Sensitive, find ways that you can reach her heart, letting her know you care deeply about what she is feeling. Have her write down her concerns and thoughts. Be very open, never critical, as you read the list together. Even if you feel a concern is overblown, or premature, or out of proportion for the true situation, be aware that these are very, very real in her mind and need to be addressed soberly. Each one of them.

### Conclusion:

1 Corinthians 13 -- the whole thing, was our wedding theme. It has stood the test of time the last 27 years through good times and awful times.

As I am sure you probably understand by now, we have had our share of really difficult trials. Being involved in a ministry situation has at times made us a target for Satan. This has been both a positive and difficult thing for us. Some-



**Bushnell family, 2008**

times we are driven to our knees in sorrow and remorse and straight to our Savior’s comforting arms. When we have recovered from our lower moments, we can truly see the benefit of being in a difficult place, as our total dependence on Christ is mandatory to survival. This is right where He wants us. Incredible. He then lifts us up and creates an even closer relationship with Him and with each other as husband and wife, after we walk through the dark valleys.

We are here to say that a really great marriage is very possible, if God is truly at the center. We would not trade our past trials for anyone else’s or anything easier, because we would not want to trade the touching, Christ-like relationship we have now with each other, fashioned by God just for us, as a result of our fires.



**Tom and Sherry Bushnell**

## Home Schooling Children with Special Needs



### Acceptance By Sharon Hensley

*(Editor's note: In this 3rd edition of her book that came out this summer, Home Schooling with Special Needs, Sharon has added a few new chapters and added up-to-date information for families homeschooling with extra challenges today. We enjoyed reading the newer version very much and know that this will be one of your favorites too. Here is a chapter from the book called, Acceptance (Realistic Expectations for Our Children and Ourselves).*

#### **Acceptance is crucial in helping us be successful teachers of our children.**

Wrapped up tightly with the grief process (*of getting through the idea that our child is indeed different and will not ever be completely whole, this side of heaven.*) is the process of acceptance.

I constantly meet people, especially fathers, who feel if their children just tried harder, all their learning problems would be solved. I also meet people who say they don't want to accept a diagnosis because they feel that means they are giving up on their children. Let me explain why I think that acceptance is so crucial in helping us be effective teachers.

I believe that in order to effectively educate our children we have to have a plan that is both appropriate and realistic. Appropriate planning

comes from understanding our children's unique blend of strengths and weakness and how they can best learn. We find this out primarily through testing and then educating ourselves about the particular learning problems that our children have. *(This is what the first section of the book is about!)*

But realistic planning can only come from acceptance. I can tell you from personal experience that knowledge and acceptance are two different ball games! When we first realized that our daughter wasn't developing language the way she should, I took her for testing and found out all I could about language delays. I also began to recognize that she had many "autistic-like" behaviors, and I was sure that as soon as we got her language problems taken care of those would go away. In the meantime, I began reading all I could on autism, and, again, I was very knowledgeable. But I kept telling myself that this was not really the problem we were facing. After two years of language/speech therapy that didn't fix the problem, I embarked on my quest for the "magic cure" that I mentioned before. I read all the miracle story books on diet, auditory training, sensory integration, holding therapy, and Lovaas. Nothing was the miracle I wanted, but I still resisted the idea of saying my daughter was autistic. (don't forget that I went through all of this even though I already had my Master's Degree in Special Education! Knowledge alone does not automatically lead to acceptance).

As I look back, I now realize how this kept me from being realistic in my expectations and my work with my daughter. I was determined to not accept that she might be autistic, so I began to work as hard as I could to make her normal. But the harder I worked and pushed her, the more frustrated and angry I became. My anger became directed towards her, and her behavior worsened instead of improving. When I was finally able to accept the fact that she was autistic, and that no matter how hard I worked or she worked, we would never change that, I was able to relax and create a more realistic program for her that has ultimately been more successful than



all the pushing and anger.

## **Do we have unrealistic expectations for our children?**

Many of you don't have children nearly as severe as my daughter, but in talking with the many people I have worked with in both schools and home schooling, I find this pattern to be the same. Let's say we have a boy who is experiencing some relatively mild difficulties in written language and who has difficulty with attention. Many people would say that those aren't really disabilities, but that's not how it feels to the parents. To them it feels like their child has just as big a disability as my daughter. When the disability is denied by others, it makes it harder for parents to work through and accept the child the way he is, instead of the way they wish he were.

Why do we have unrealistic expectations for our children and why is it often so hard for us to accept the learning difficulties that our children have? As I have stated earlier, our society is obsessed with over achievement. When we do find out that we have children with learning problems, we desperately try everything we can bet our hand on to "fix" them so they can be "normal", just as I did. One of the most common questions I am asked after testing a child is, "What do we do, or what can we use to fix this?" Accepting all of our children as God has made them, whether high achievers, average learning disabled, or more severely handicapped, will help us to be realistic in our expectation and to set realistic goals for their education.

## **What is normal?**

I think another reason we want to try to make our children "normal" is that we tend to take at least part of our own self-worth from our children's achievements. When we have children who don't "measure up" in the eyes of society, it is easy to feel that we don't measure up. This is further compounded when we encounter professionals who view the "norm" as the only desired goal, and that nothing less will do. This only added to the feelings of worthlessness of the parents who are often already doing the best they can. Because our society is highly literate, and knowledge and literacy are highly valued, it is easy to think that those things are the only measure of our children's and by extension, our worth. Of course, some weaknesses can be strengthened or even remediated with the

proper therapy, and if that is the case, then those goals are realistic, but many learning difficulties are not "fixable". That doesn't mean that we are any less because we can't do the impossible!

## **Our children's disabilities...**

### **A reflection of us?**

I believe that there are two things we need to do when we start feeling that our children's difficulties are a reflection on us. First, we need to educate ourselves thoroughly about the particular learning problem our child faces. (I know I keep saying this, but I can't stress enough the importance of accurate knowledge to the success of our schooling efforts.) We need to know what the realistic expectations for this child are. What parts of his learning problems are possibly open for remediation and what parts do we need to just accept and work with the best we can to bring him to his highest potential.

Of course, it may be easier to agree with that in our heads than in our hearts. We may have friends or even family members who feel we are just not working hard enough, or we are too soft on little Johnny, or we don't discipline



**Alison learning, at age 7**

enough or in the right way, or...I could go on and on. You know the comments or the feeling you get from other people. When my daughter was younger and would throw one of her screaming tantrums in a store, I would get the "bad mother"

looks from people too. (In my less charitable moments I have thought of having a T-shirt printed that says, "I'm Autistic. What's Your Problem?" but I know that wouldn't be very nice. Still there are those days....)

Whether it is a grandparent who just can't accept that Susie wouldn't have a reading problem if she just weren't so lazy, or people in the grocery store who have gotten my little "crash course" in autism, the idea is the same - when we stop feeling guilty or responsible for our children's difficulties, we can deal openly and confidently with other people. And I think our positive, accepting attitudes carry over to other people and, most importantly, to our children.

Second, we need to focus on our children's strengths and abilities. It is easy to become so consumed with our children's difficulties that we can forget about the things they *can* do. Seeing more than just our children's weaknesses can help us be realistic in a positive way. Again, though, we have to be careful not to take the "norm" as our only measure. Some strengths are relative to the child but still may not reach "normal". That is OK. If it is a relative strength, we need to recognize it and build



**Alison today**

on it just the same. And remembering to build on strengths can make our goals and our teaching much more realistic.

### **Is phonics for everyone?**

We hear so much about how phonics is the only "good" way to reach reading. However, if I had a child with an auditory processing difficulty who is not learning to read using phonics but has great visual skills, I would be silly not to use those visual skills to begin teaching reading by sight while working on phonics as a side issue in an effort to build auditory skills. Yet, so many times we think that our children must learn the way "normal" children do, or we have failed. Looking realistically at our children's strengths can help us use more appropriate

teaching methods for those children and can keep us reasonably sane in the process! Look in my book for more chapters on using strengths when discussing the process of planning your program!

**(Note from Sharon Hensley for her third edition of her book:** *This book originally came out when I was expecting our youngest child, who is now fourteen years old! Throughout the book, you will see mentions of my children at various ages. As this edition went to print in 2008, Alison is now twenty-one, Laura is twenty and Logan is fourteen. Many things have changed over the years, but the basic principles that I have used in our fifteen years of home schooling and have used with countless families remain the same. Therefore, although resources have been updated and new sections have been added, the bulk of the book remains unchanged from the original.*

*I have now experienced almost every stage of homeschooling from preschool to high school, from multiple children to only one at home doing school. And we have experienced the many stages of having a child with severe disabilities from diagnosis to conservatorship. I hope that whatever stage you are at - just beginning or a seasoned veteran - you will be blessed and encouraged as you read: Home Schooling Children with Special Needs.*

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**Sharon Hensley**

# An Angel Among Us--Joey's story

**By Marilyn Lane**

**June of 2006** - We got a call from Sherry, at CHASK. She asked us if we would be interested in having our CHASK family profile sent to a birth mom, who had an infant boy with special needs. She told us a little about him and we said YES! even though in our hearts we really wanted a little girl-- We now know the Lord had different plans for us.

**July 2006** Sherry called us to let us know we had been picked as Joey's parents. We hadn't had a baby boy in 14 years, so we needed to go shopping. None of the little girls clothes we had bought would work!

**Aug. 2006** I went to California to meet baby Joey and to learn how to care for him. He was born with his bladder on the outside of his body, plus no working kidneys. He would have to be on dialysis every 12 hours until he could get new ones from a donor. We came home 2 weeks later. He went straight to our local Children's Hospital and stayed there until mid Oct. 2006. While we were there we learned how to do all his bandage changes plus his dialysis.

**Thanksgiving 2006** Family members from out-of-town came to meet Joey. That weekend we had Joey christened. Two weeks later Joey was in crisis, back in the hospital.

**Dec. 2006** All things going great until last week. Joey had his 1st seizure. Now we are back in hospital.



**Joey 4 months old**

**January 2007 to Easter** - Few downs... more ups. At picture time, he loves it when the camera comes out.

**June 16, 2007** - Happy 1st Birthday Joey. His crib rails are covered in music toys, because now he had a g-tube plus the dialysis. He spends a lot of time in his crib. He also loves his warm, fuzzy blankets.



**Joey 1 year old!**

**It is now 2008--we are getting almost big enough for a new kidney**

**Easter 2008** Joey helps color the eggs. Everyone else makes a mess... not Joey... Hey, Joey, why are your hands hiding? Oh pretty hands Joe!



**May 2008** I take Joey shopping. He can now hold up his head but not sit up, crawl, or walk. I always take a blanket for the cart, to lay him down inside, but today he points to the seat so I put him in with my purse beside him to help

hold him up. He takes it out! "OK Joe we can try it your way!"

Wow what a big boy. I then go to look at

the flowers, Joey also no longer talks but signs. He lets me know he wants me to buy red geraniums. He signs 10 red ones... then he signs "Done, no more." The other customers just cheer him on. He loves all the attention.

**June 16, 2008** - Happy 2nd Birthday. Joey got his first cupcake. He ate the frosting and fed the dog the rest. It's a start.

**July 2008** He patti-caked through all the fireworks.

**Oct. 2008** Joey went trick-or-treating with his brother and sister. He loves to dress up.

**Thanksgiving 2008** - Oh boy! A family get-together. He loves it so much when his big brothers and sisters come home with their families.

**Dec. 2008** Joey helped make cookies and even decorated them. The treasure of these moments are priceless. Money can't buy them. Time for Christmas pictures. Christmas morning Joey sits in his own special chair and opens all his own presents.

**Jan. 2009** Joey still doing great. He has the nickname of Chubb-Wubb. He has now learned to lick a spoon and put it on his nose. He is such a clown. The music he likes is all classical, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and his favorite was Jesus Loves Me--He LA-LAs that one all the time.

**Feb.12, 2009** - We traveled to Pennsylvania for the birth of our new grandson; due Feb.13th by c-section. Joey got sick. Back into the hospital we went. He was going to come home Sat. but doctors felt better waiting until Sunday.

Sat night Joey medically crashed. He got his angel wings at 8:48am Sunday morning. We were on the road coming home when we got the news that he was not doing well. When we got to the hospital, there he lay, already gone to heaven, his body waiting for us.

**Saying Good-bye** - Joey, you gave us so much blessing. Every new day it was "Good morning, Joey!" At night it was always, "Good night Joey, until tomorrow."

Would we have adopted you, little Joey, knowing what lay ahead and that our hearts would break?

OH YES! We miss you Joey. I'm so sorry that I wasn't there to hold you home... Love, Mommy



**Joey, Christmas 2008**

**Note from Marilyn** - From his beginning breath at birth, he had so many things wrong inside, that he shouldn't have even lived at birth...

After Joey's death they did an autopsy. The results were incredible. They found no calcium in his bones. It had all gone into his brain. But why? To this day that can't be answered, but to us this is amazing. Joey loved to jump in his bouncer all the time, roll all over the floor and push off with his feet against the couch.

The day before he got sick, his therapist came to work with him. He sat by himself for almost 7 minutes. Then he stood up and tried to take a step!

We were totally surprised about the misplaced calcium, and that there wasn't any in his leg bones... yet not one broken bone, anywhere. Our conclusion...He was already using his wings at birth. We just we didn't know it.

Thank You! CHASK for the gift of our very own Angel, Joey.



**Lane family 2008**

## A Blessed Beginning - NATHHAN and CHASK Locally Reaching Out to Pregnant Women and Teens

**By Sherry Bushnell**

A Blessed Beginning Pregnancy Center is NATHHAN and CHASK's local outreach, ministering to pregnant moms and babies. It is managed by Tanya Currie.

Perhaps the most exciting thing about working with women in our own town, is that we get to see them face to face.

This has been an invaluable experience for us, helping us to truly understand and minister over the phone to birth moms facing a difficult pregnancy. Each mom that we work with has her own set of heart-rending fears and sorrows. It is easy to transfer our concern over the phone, as we have worked with pregnant women of all ages face to face.

We wanted to share with you our August 2009 experience at the local fair. I know that many of you have attended your local fair and perhaps even visited the local crisis pregnancy center booth. It was very interesting to be on the booth side of things, instead of the spectator this year. We were blessed beyond explanation, although pretty tired, by the time the 4 days were done.

We made 230 fresh apple pies and over 800 peanut butter chocolate chip cookies. It was a lot of fun... and a lot of work! Our goal was 75 pies a day and we met that each day with happy success.

We want to give a huge thank-you to all the volunteers that came to slice apples, mix filling (by far the messiest job), roll crust and bake...pie after pie... after pie. Each day Wed, Thurs and Friday before the fair, 2 exuberant crews arrived. The morning crew spent most of the time slicing transparent apples. The afternoon crew rolled pie crust and mixed and filled pies.

We used a special crust recipe that was guaranteed to work. I was having nightmares about someone breaking a tooth on my previous crust recipe that was supposedly "no-fail". After putting the pies together, we froze them solid in a big borrowed chest freezer. Several different women came to pick up the frozen pies the day before needed, to bake them in their home ovens and then

deliver them to the fair booth the next morning.

Our booth was actually 40 feet long, by 12 feet wide, with 4 sections. We built a Swiss style "pie hut" that we backed our 8 ft utility trailer up against that has shelves along one side. We stored our baked pies, cookies, paper products in here away from the sun.

We had 3 canopies all strung with carnival lights for the night time. Under one canopy we set up a couple tables and chairs, an outdoor wooden, swinging chair for two (complete with a quilt for padding) and an old-fashioned rocking chair.

The second canopy had all the tables with literature, books, all the pro-life buttons, life-is-precious stickers, helium balloons we filled (about 400 of them!) with pro-life messages and the fetal models nested in a real, live baby buggy.

We also purchased 150 little 12-week-size models to give away appropriately. These were a big hit with the children and younger teens.

The third canopy had all the baby clothes that we had left over from the summer, to share with women in need. It was very touching to see women come and linger over the fetal models and then look at the baby clothes. Moms with many and young teen moms alike rubbed shoulders as they found items that they could use. All were VERY thankful.

I would have to say that the response to our Blessed Beginning booth was outstanding. I was very taken aback by how much the teens and young adults were interested in the fetal models. I spent the busy part of each of the 4 days just seated beside the baby buggy that held life-like fetal models from 7 weeks to 30 weeks. I sat there filling balloons and talking, and as girls came up, I sort of came up with a set way of presenting the fetal models. It went something like this:

As a group of girls standing over the fetal models were oooing and ahing over them I state with big enthusiasm....."Wow, isn't that amazing....?"

I would then pick up the box with the tiniest fetal models and point to the 7-week-old baby and say, "This is just a tiny baby... take a close look." Their heads would bend way down... "See the itty-bitty fingers, toes, nose, eyes, ears and little mouth?"

The girls would all nod and continue to stare. "This is not just a piece of tissue, is it?"

They would agree that these are cute babies and I would point out different models at 7..8..9..10.. weeks.

Then picking up the largest model, which is a 30-week baby, weighted with the approximate weight of a real baby, I would hand it to one of the girls.

At this point she would gasp in surprise at how real the baby felt and would often cradle the baby and even rock it. They would then pass the baby carefully to each of their friends (all gasping in surprise, in turn.)

I would look one of the girls in the eyes, and point to the 7 - 10 week models and say... "These babies turn into big babies pretty quick, don't they?"

They would all exclaim at how fast babies grew.. Then I would share

with them about how some folks would like you to believe that a baby is just a blob of tissue. Picking up the 12-week model and handing it to them, I would say, "Isn't this a sweet baby and not a blob?"

The girls would all say..."I couldn't (or wouldn't) ever kill my baby!" I would then tell them that they can keep that little 12-week baby to show a friend. They were all truly thankful.

The pre-teens carried them half sticking out of their pockets (so baby could "see"), coming back to me to tell me the name of "their baby" and to have more looks at the larger models. Some of the girls would go find other girls



to bring over and share, verbatim, my spiel, just as I had just presented it to them an hour ago. Amazing!

This incredible opportunity to share with the teens and young women in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, I will never forget. I am thinking that most of our young people had never seen anything like those fetal models. A huge thank-you to the churches and all the

others for funding us. It made all the difference. We were able to just share with the girls, and sell pie and cookies, relaxing about "making money to cover expenses."

Other wonderful things happened at the fair too. Making new friends and connections with the community, ministering to a woman that had an abortion and was hurting. One woman carried the 20-week-old

model around for about 15 minutes with tears in her eyes. My heart ached for her. Pregnant women and new mommies came and got new or almost new baby clothes. We were just about cleaned out of everything. Over and over we heard from them... "What a blessing... We have no money right now" or "Why are you doing this?" or "This is incredible that you would offer this."

**Truth is, we were the ones blessed.**

### **Baby and Maternity clothes, desperately needed.**

Please send items to:  
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# Grandpa and Grandma's Page

## Helping Our Children Learn to Focus

By Dennis Lamphere

As a little guy in 1947, sitting in 1st grade, focus was not something I was very good at.

Matter of fact, that was the very reason why the teacher felt I should repeat 1st grade for the 2nd time.

I can remember thinking inside, "If they only knew how boring those pictures of Jane running or Spot jumping were!" I also thought, "When are we really going to learn something interesting?"

Looking back (grandpas do a lot of that!), I can see how my teachers, and even my own parents, underestimated my ability to learn. My seeming inability to "focus" was a sign to them that "something was wrong."

But I could get VERY excited about challenging projects like building play houses or running my toy bulldozer, or how much water I could put in a small pond before it would overflow, causing a "flood".

Their methods of teaching were simply not my method of learning. Words, words, words.... And more words.... I was a visual learner in a very word-orientated world.

Today there is a much better understanding of the learning styles of children. With all styles, the common goal is "focus". What I mean by focus is the ability to



concentrate on a subject for a period of time, to come to a conclusion or to form a question about a subject...enough to form long term retention of information.

The opposite side of focus is a very short attention span, frustration, anger, fast movement with the hands and feet, large, open, day-dreamy eyes and mussed up hair.... Sound familiar? That was me. That was my experience in trying to understand how to learn in a word-related environment.

Then one day, someone suggested that I slow down, take one thing at a time and look at it, feel it, enjoy it, take the time to understand each little part. Just that moment, was the beginning of my learning to focus.

As a result, I made it through school and even some college. I married a wonderful woman, Linda, who, after 48 years is still my lovely wife. My children are all grown and serving Jesus. I have 17 grandchildren. God has blessed my "focus" on Him.

And now, 65 years later,

after that little boy sat fidgeting, with mussed up hair, feeling like a failure and gradually learning to "focus", I am still learning how to corral my thoughts on what is in front of me *at the moment*.

I am able to spend hours on something I really enjoy. For me, choosing to fasten my attention on something is the key to learning and remembering.

Teaching myself to hone-in on a subject or an item of interest and truly concentrate, helps me expand a skill that works for other things that are not as interesting to me.

The focusing skills that I learned have enabled me to feed and raise my family. Ironically, what still peaks my interest today, is what I liked to do before I could "focus" in school. I enjoy my bulldozer, construction and driving my 18 wheeler.

I have, however, also been able to expand my interests and skills to actually enjoy reading, listening to Christian radio, visiting with friends and traveling....

Let's help our children to purposely focus on Jesus and let them realize that they are made uniquely with special gifts. They will understand this, if we honestly believe it is true and emulate that as we live with them.

Focusing on gifts can be exciting and lead to all kinds of adventures.

Take a simple task at hand, focus on it.... And watch what happens!



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