

NATHHAN / CHASK

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

Fall/ Winter 2011



Little Nina Glazebrook

The Cost Of Adoption

No Perfect Church

**Supporting Families That Have
Children with Disability**

Record Keeping

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

P.O. Box 310

**Moyie Springs, ID
83845**

(208) 267- 6246

NATHANEWS@aol.com

www.nathhan.org

www.chask.org

Front Cover

Nina Glazebrook

Being adopted by

*Larry and Nancy
Glazebrook, Fresno,
California*

Read the whole story
on page 21.

Letter From the Editors:

Our quick, mild, summer has turned into a fast-paced, cold winter (we skipped Fall this year). A lot of snow, early on, has quickly made up for our mild winter last year. It was minus 10 degrees before Thanksgiving! Guess we better hunker down and be prepared for lots of firewood going into the stove and driving verrrry slowly on the ice.

Tom is finishing up his 3rd year of law school. His 4th year starts soon and it will be California Bar prep time from here on out. Along with answering NATHHAN / CHASK calls, he is working at Wilson Law firm 3 days a week and getting just about the perfect law apprenticeship a lawyer-to-be could ask for.

Sherry is working at home with her family, in the NATHHAN/ CHASK office and as a midwife as the needs arise. She is helping remodeling a house in Libby, Montana as a birth center. They should be done by January. She is also taking a trip with Sherya to Oaxaca, Mexico, to visit a family with Missionary Ventures, who are also building a birth clinic.

Jake and Renita: We are very excited to be sharing in the pregnancy and soon birth of our first grandbaby. Jacob and Renita are expecting February 23rd. This will be a milestone of sorts and a moment we as grandparents have been waiting for. Renita is a good mother already, eating well and taking rests when needed. She is very good at gestating!

Josh (25 yrs old) has just finished re-setting his 2nd log home. His custom work is very nice. The extra effort to be done by the first snow fall were all in vain. It was bitterly cold, raining, and then LOTs of snow. He is very glad to be done.

Zack (19 yrs old) is working odd jobs shoveling snow, pick up work, living and working in Sandpoint, Idaho.

Zeph (17 years old) is almost finish with his GED and has been thrilled with the start of skiing season again.

Jordan (23 yrs old) is getting better and more thorough with washing dishes and pitching in helping with household chores. I know he misses being outside. His steps and balance are not sure enough for negotiating the snow and ice, so he stays inside.

Sheela (22 yrs old) is helping Lynny with her occupational therapy exercises now. We had a therapist come in to help with wheelchair renovating and providing an exercise plan to help with Lynny's contractures. This was really exciting for the girls, as visits from the OT therapist was a lot of fun. They see her as a "visitor" just to "visit" with them.

Lynny (18 yrs old) has been working on using a sliding board to get directly from her wheelchair to the toilet or bed, instead of getting out of the chair, onto the floor then up onto the toilet, onto the floor again and then up into her chair.

This has required a much sturdier chair and we are working on getting some bathroom adjustments made too.

Sheraya (15 yrs old) is mostly working on Spanish and spelling this year. She is going to Oaxaca, Mexico with Sherry in January, to visit and work at a newly developing birth center, Casa Compasiva, for a few weeks.

Mercy Grace (13 yrs old) is taking on more of the cooking and household management. This has been totally fine with her, as long as she gets to keep her baby-sitting job a few houses down.

Jayben (9 yrs old) and ShaHannah (6 yrs old) are both doing school work and working at staying on task with their chore/school routine. ShaHannah loves to go to the library each week. She gets to spend a day or two with Grandma each week and has a special section of a room filled with wonderful educational stuff and toys to keep her busy.

Our family is working through the normal winter schedule. We balance school work with snow boarding and skiing. The older kids work all Spring and early Summer to purchase their season passes by July. They are super cheap. Then they negotiate all winter for rides and opportunities to get up on that mountain!

Most importantly, we strive to find the time (no substitute exists) we need to keep our relationships growing. This means meaningful, heart-to-

heart communication. This making-the-time is vital to our marriage and for keeping the hearts of our children close to us. We make time to hear the emotional needs and concerns of those we love.

NATHHAN / CHASK News E-Style

Like many of you, NATHHAN / CHASK as an organization is feeling the down economy by a lowered amount of donations coming in. There is absolutely no way we are going to turn away a birth parent in need of finding a family for her baby. We continue on.

So, we are not giving up ship, but tightening our belts. This issue of the NATHHAN / CHASK news is available on the internet instead of our normal print style copy. As the funds are not available to print this issue, the NATHHAN / CHASK board unanimously voted to go to a e-style magazine and see where we are next issue.

There are no apologies needed for hard work in rough times. As you are, with your individual families, we are prioritizing what is most important, what can we cut and still do a good job.

Informative Quarterly Fund Raising Letters

We will be sending out very newsy quarterly reports to our donors. These 4 page letters will be stories of what is actually happening with the birth parents and adoptive families in a much more candid format than in the NATHHAN / CHASK news. They will also share our needs and what we can expect together as we are serving birth families calling in crisis, with a baby they cannot keep.

We will be sorting our data base and selecting donors that have given \$25.00 a year or more. If you want to help us make CHASK happen, join with us in meeting the needs of families dealing with disabilities.

May the Lord bless your home!

**Tom, Sherry, Jacob and Renita,
Josh, Zack, Zeph, Sheraya, Jordan,
Sheela, Lynny, Mercy, Jayben and
ShaHannah
Bushnell**

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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, a pregnancy resource center.

NATHHAN 's Ministry

National Challenged Homeschoolers

NATHHAN / CHASK NEWS - Printed and mailed or E-Style magazine, published twice a year, includes resources, articles from parents and professionals, and lots of letters from families, plus much more. Go to www.nathhan.org and click on Magazine.

NATHHAN WEB PAGE 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.

NATHHAN / CHASK Quarterly Information Letter - This is sent to donors interested in reading more stories about children saved from abortion and NATHHAN / CHASK's current needs.

www.nathhan.org
nathanews@aol.com

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
chaskinfo@aol.com

Featuring CHASK children and families

**[www.youtube.com/
user/spiritwingsmusic](http://www.youtube.com/user/spiritwingsmusic)**

H2O Productions and Spirit Wings Music in association with CHASK, Presents: Somebody Loves Me.....a promotional DVD.

Recording artist Rebecca Huseby and Managing Editor: H2O Productions, Lee Haarstick, are proud to dedicate this presentation to the promotion of CHASK: For Rebecca's product list or order information, contact Rebecca at

spiritwingsmusic.com

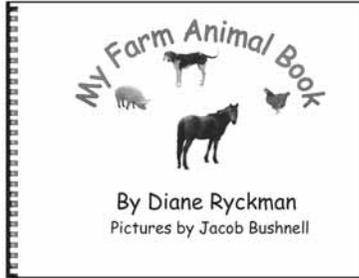
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If phonics isn't clicking, try...

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

E-mail: 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.

CHASK supports birth parents in crisis.

We find loving adoptive homes

Picture of baby with special needs and
mommy or something

**for any baby, with any
medical concern,
*because you make it happen!***

**Please consider monthly
sharing with CHASK. We
need your help.**

www.chask.org

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
Online forum: 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: Tina 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

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

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

Life-Affirming Support Groups

Carrying To Term Resources

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

DrugWatch.com

Questions regarding which medications are harmful for pregnancy? Contact CJ Woodland at (800)452-0949
cwoodland@drugwatch.com

Be not Afraid 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

Prenatal partners for life www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org

Living with Trisomy 13 or 18

www.livingwithtrisomy13.org
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

Perinatal Hospice

www.perinatalhospice.org

Rescue Now

Courses that provide groundwork for those who have been impacted by infant and fetal loss.

www.tlrescuenow.com

Post Abortion Resources

Rachel's Vineyard Retreats

1-877-HOPE-4-ME (1-877-467-3463)
www.RachelsVineyard.org

Healing Hearts Ministries (on-line counseling)

www.HealingHearts.org 1-888-792-8282

Ramah International

www.RamahInternational.org

Save One, 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
www.friendship.org**

NATHHAN Web page

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



1st Straight Talk

A Parent's 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 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!

*An excellent resource for parents helping their
children overcome language delays.*

Order online at www.nathhan.org or use the order form on page 25!

CHASK— Stories to Warm Your Heart

On behalf of CHASK, I would like to thank you for your prayers and support over the summer and fall months. Our 24 / 7 commitment to being there for birth families facing an adverse prenatal diagnosis involves round-the-clock availability. It is not enough to send our calls to an answering service. When birth parents are in a crisis situation involving the life or death of their baby they need help now, not a returned call later.

Perhaps it would help you to get a feel for what kind of birth parents we are working with on a weekly basis if we shared some stories. Some weeks are very busy and then there are slow times. We can't quite figure out what prompts it to rain babies and birth parents when it does.

In September, a birth mother due in late November 2010 called us to see if we had any families willing to adopt her baby. Birth parents are Hispanic. Birth dad has a skin condition called Neurofibromytosis, which varies in severity. Their first son was born with it and has a mild case. We sent them families and as often happens we do not hear from them... sometimes never again. She was sure they wanted to place baby for adoption.

She called at the end of October and had chosen a family, but did not want to speak with them yet. So I told her to call back if she was interested in sharing her info with the adoptive family.

Early November she called in a bit of a panic to say that her doctor had just moved the due date up.

She then told me the CHASK family she was interested in contacting. I contacted the CHASK family and birth mom was relieved to know that her plans for placing for adoption were going smoothly. This is a huge comfort to women

who have made a decision to place their baby. The CHASK family is patiently sharing these last few days of pregnancy with her and sharing the birth of her baby.

An African American birth mom in very, very difficult circumstances called CHASK to ask for help. She had a large uterine fibroid and Sickle Cell anemia, and was weak. She needed help and housing. Birth dad was unavailable and was in and out of the country.

She wanted to have a family to care for her and her baby during her pregnancy and have the helping family be willing to let her decide whether she wanted to place baby for adoption after baby was born. She was leaning toward keeping her baby.

This was a tall request, even for CHASK. She persisted in her requests, sure that there must be someone to help her through CHASK. Amazingly enough, several families responded to our request for help for her.

A family from Maine corresponded with her and just last week birth mom had her baby. There were late-pregnancy complications but baby was born and both are safe. Now she is in care of a loving church family able to minister to her. She is getting a new start. Here is the letter we received today from the CHASK family in Maine that is caring for her:

"I just wanted to drop you a quick note and let you know that Shelly and her baby boy arrived safely in Maine yesterday. She has been through a lot physically, and emotionally, but she has my family and good friends to help her now. We are so thankful to God and to you for sending her our way.

We are very blessed to know such a fine young woman and her beautiful baby.

May the Lord Bless you and your family, and all who work for the CHASK organization. Thanks again for putting up with all my e-mails, and may the Lord continue this special work He has called us to do." — CHASK family in Maine

A CHASK family will typically correspond with hurting birth parents for weeks before baby is

born. That CHASK family will pray, will financially prepare for a new little one, will cry and will stress along with the birth family as the big day arrives. Imagine the incredible strength and faith it must take to put their trust in the Lord during this time of waiting.

We would like to share with you a heart-warming e-mail from a CHASK family that truly was answering the call of ministering Christ's love...

"On Monday evening, after we first received the phone call asking us if we would consider adopting Kaleb, I felt like God placed a verse on my heart. I have meditated on that verse all week, not really having a full understanding of it's meaning until now. It is found in Psalm 57:2 *"I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me."* Right before getting to Covington to pick up Kaleb, we decided on a name for him which meant, "The Lord is Exalted". That was our hearts desire all along...Praise God for his goodness."

For most of us, our lives go on as usual. We are not aware of a birth mother's heart-felt pain as she struggles to choose her child's destiny.... until God points out the need to us. But God sees their tears.

Birth parents going through a huge emotional upset such as giving up a child, are open to hearing how a loving God can help them through. This is a tremendous opportunity to speak into hearts that may not understand the love of Christ.

Sometimes as a birth family walks through the deep sorrow of finding out their baby has Down syndrome, spina bifida or another medical concern, they grow to understand there is a greater picture. With a CHASK's families counseling, their new perception of life can include a realization that God loves them and their baby. It is a start.

Here is a note from a birth family that

were not Christians at the time they started corresponding with the CHASK family. They came from a culture that did not value children with special needs. They really wanted to place their baby with this CHASK family.... until the very hour after birth.

"It is from the bottom our heart that we express our love and respect to your family."

You stood with us in this terrible grieving time. We believe that The Almighty God has done His miracle in both families. We believe His blessings are upon both families.

Your family showed a great lesson on how to help each other. You showed what true love for a human being is. You guys are Great. You are Kind. Let God bless your family!

On our part, we learned the value of patience. We have enjoyed the fruits of praying. We believe this will be a cornerstone to strengthen our relationship. It gave us strength to keep our child. We understood that God is with us. Please let God bless us, too.

Let us keep praying for one another."

I am sure you can imagine the CHASK family's original excitement at being chosen when they got that first call asking them to be adoptive parents. And, I am sure you can also imagine their deep confusion and sorrow, mingled with rejoicing, as they realized that the birth family had decided to keep their baby and receive God's blessing.

In fact, you and I are privileged to hear the hearts of this CHASK family afterward. Here is part of the letter they shared with CHASK, after they got the above e-mail from the birth family.

"As far as pursuing another adoption in the future, we are waiting expectantly to receive another phone call at a future time. We have no fear of entering into another adoption. We are not discouraged by the events of

the last week. Rather, we are so encouraged to know that God will indeed make his purposes for us known.”

The plight of Christian families who have adopted children beyond their ability to care for:

Each week we talk on the phone with Christian families in a very, very difficult position. Most have adopted child from overseas, often Russian or Liberia. They were unprepared or became unable to care for the very child they had dreamed of, paid a lot of money to go get, and sometimes have spent thousands of dollars to bring about emotional healing.

Here is a sample e-mail that is pretty common:

First, my wife and I are so glad to have been referred to your site. This is an oasis in the desert for us right now. We have an adopted daughter who is turning seven in September who has been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder. We have tried since she was 3 months old to get her to be part of our family, but to no avail.

Having nine of our own biological children, five of which are now adults, this has just about destroyed us. We are at our end and in looking for help, were referred to your site, in hopes some loving family or couple would be able to adopt her. Our fear has always been that this would be viewed as a negative and involve Social Services and endanger our own children. Our adopted daughter is not physically harmful as of yet. The peace in our home has left and each day for all of us is a struggle. Please tell me how we go about putting her profile up on your site and the process involved. She would do well with a single parent or a couple with no children who feel a desire to reach out to a challenged child. Thank you so much for your efforts and time.

Although CHASK is unable to help every family that contacts us, CHASK's rate for helping new adoptive parents looking to help older children with emotional problems and adoptive families in need, is pretty good.

Our main focus is finding homes for unborn babies and ministering to birth parents in need. Thanks to CHASK donors and CHASK adoptive families, we are helping literally hundreds of families solve some serious dilemmas involving children with disability of some kind.

Due to confidentiality issues, we cannot always share some of the stories. We wish that we could.

The internet is a pretty powerful tool for finding information on just about anyone. Being careful about shielding birth parents and adoptive families needing to re-home their children is a challenge.

Still, we do really want you to know more about some of these real life situations and be an active part of CHASK.

We will be doing this via a quarterly newsletter that most of our current donors have already been receiving.

We look forward to sharing with you more through personal e-mail.

If you want to be a part of CHASK, we encourage you to become a partner with us in ministering to children with special needs through locating loving homes for children with challenges.

Please share a donation helping birth parents in need of knowing there are families that truly believe in life-affirming choices.

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The Cost of Adoption

Article written together by: Jessica Allinger, Kris Breneman, Jerri Unruh and Sherry Bushnell

(Editor's note: Jessica is the daughter of Ruth Allinger, our secretary here at the NATHHAN/CHASK office. Jessica was taking an English class and one requirement was that she was not allowed to write about subjects such as abortion, homosexuality, and so on. The teacher felt that they were too controversial for an entry-level English class. She wanted them to focus on learning to do research and write, not on defending a belief. Jessica didn't totally like that stipulation (although she could see her point), but she had to work with it. We thought she did an excellent job of getting information and writing about a subject near and dear to our hearts.

*Kris Breneman and family have adopted through CHASK, and have experienced the adoption of a special needs child twice; Samuel a newborn with a severe heart condition, and Aiden a 3 year old with schizen-
cephally.*



Julia Unruh

When the Unruhs adopted Julia, a baby girl with a severe seizure disorder known as Ohtahara Syndrome, they could not have known what the next months would bring. Most children with Ohtahara Syndrome do not live past their first year, and those who do are severely disabled and usually die in childhood. Julia is now almost three years old, and

while there has been lots of progress, new problems have also developed.

The monetary costs of a home study and a lawyer are fairly easy to estimate. The greater investments of time and emotion are not so easy to predict. Has adopting Julia been worth the resources and investments involved? Julia's mom, Jerri, writes "Absolutely! Julia is a blessing in every way."

What are these resources involved in adopting a disabled child? By examining the resources involved and the experiences of several families who have adopted disabled children, maybe we can decide for ourselves if adopting a developmentally disabled child is worth the cost.

The Financial Cost:

Perhaps the first cost that comes to mind is that of money. What does it cost to adopt a disabled child, and how can one afford it? One major cost, and probably the first to be dealt with, is that of a home study. Before placing a child with a family, the adoption agency wants to know that the family is able to care for the child, and they determine that through the home study process. They make sure that the house is safe, and that the prospective parents are healthy enough to care for the child. They gain background checks and ask for character references as well. Those who want to adopt may also be required to take some training to better equip themselves to care for an adopted child. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, an agency such as the Department of Social Services, which places children who are in foster care, may conduct a home study free of charge. If not, it usually costs about \$300-\$500, and that amount is usually reimbursed after the adoption. A home study through private agencies and social workers costs much more, anywhere from

\$1000-\$3000 dollars.

The Breneman family adopted their first special-needs child, Samuel, through the private adoption agency, CASI Foundation for Kids.

(Editor's note: Here the Breneman family is sharing very frankly about their financial experience



regarding their first adoption experience. I think Kris's advice is very good and that all families who are interested in adopting should take note. Their baby, Samuel, died before adoption was finalized. This is sometimes life in the special needs adoption lane.)

Samuel Breneman

“The financial cost... my estimate (and it's conservative) of what it cost our family for a private adoption - Sam's situation specifically - is over \$10,000 (10K). We spent over \$3000 on home study stuff (through CASI Foundation for Kids), over \$1500 in travel expenses to Southern California and back with Sam (hotel, airfare, rental car, food, etc...). Over \$3000 in agency costs to the agency that placed Sam with us ("Hope for Kids", in Southern California), over \$3000 in out-of-pocket medical expenses (He should have been on Medicaid, but was not, so our insurance covered him and we were responsible for all of his medical bills.)

The \$3,000 we paid to Hope for Kids was all donated money. There were several small donations that helped with the medical expenses, and the funeral expenses. I figured, a year ago when I last considered it, that we had probably - personally - paid out at least \$10K from our family budget. From my perspective, it's all God's money. We just did our best to be good stewards as He continued to spend lavishly in whatever way

He pleased relative to Sam's adoption! :)

Yes, for many families there are grants and fundraisers that you can tap in to for expenses. For anyone with an income more than twice the poverty level, however, our experience is that there was NO money available anywhere to help us. Every government accessible program is based on income, and most every non-government grant program is based on your income as well. So, the only financial help we found was God moving His people to contribute to us anonymously.

There is a fantastic, over \$10K federal tax deduction available for people who adopt. We would definitely have qualified to file for significant tax deductions this year because of our efforts to adopt Sam. However, in God's sovereignty, we were unable to obtain a social security number or tax ID number for our baby Sam before he died. We worked very hard for 3 months toward that end while he was still living. Things were finally rolling in the right direction when he died... then everyone just walked away and left us with the bills.

So, lesson learned (maybe :)! Don't take a special-needs child into your home unless they are on Medicaid, or you are prepared to pay out-of-pocket for the medical expenses you'll face if you are over poverty level and have minimal insurance.” *(End of this quote).*

The Unruhs adopted Julia through a private adoption agency. Their home study cost \$900, and they were later able to get that, as well as travel and other expenses, reimbursed by the state of Arizona, where Julia was born. They did, however, have to pay the \$2000 placement fee.

Another financial aspect is medical costs. Disabled children often have ongoing medical needs. They may require medication, surgery, and different types of therapy. Julia needs doctor visits, occupational and speech therapy, and basic care, as well as medication which she must take every day. Without Medicaid and/or insurance, the cost of those services will be very expensive. In addition to the Unruh's insurance, Julia is on Medicaid. They also receive a monthly amount from the state of Arizona called an adoption subsidy.

The Cost of Time:

Besides the money involved in adopting a child with disabilities, there is the issue of time. A severely disabled child will need more of a parent's time than a non-disabled child. Basic skills such as eating or walking are impossible for some children. Julia, although two years old, still requires a feeding tube for receiving nutrition. She is able to eat a little, but not enough to keep up her strength. She also requires constant supervision by someone who knows how to use a suction machine for her choking episodes and how to deal with her seizures. Disabled children may need regular visits with doctors and specialists. There may be time involved taking a child to therapy and doing therapy with them at home.

The Emotional Cost:

There is a third cost to adopting a special-needs child. It is the cost of emotions. While someone may be able to plan for the time involved in adopting a special-needs child, and they may also be able to gather the necessary finances, they will not be able to adequately determine how adopting will influence their feelings. Adopting any child, including a disabled child, can be a good or bad experience. It can go smoothly, or be filled with difficulty. Not every adoption experience has a happily-ever-after ending. It would be foolish to jump into an adoption without seriously considering whether or not you are willing to follow through if things get hard. Perhaps the experience of the Breneman family can demonstrate this.

Kevin and Kris Breneman already had four children before they decided to adopt. Kris explains,

“If you are looking at it from a purely humanist perspective, in my experience, the benefits of adopting are *NOT* greater than the time, resources, and costs involved. If I look at all of the suffering and sacrifice involved in giving Sam a family, from a purely humanist perspective, I can find no LOGICAL benefit - material or emotional.

If placed on a scale, the endless months of emotional pain would probably be considered to have far outweighed the 16 weeks of emotional joy we briefly experienced.

This would be my opinion as to why so many people do NOT adopt special-needs kids. We are - humanly speaking - primarily motivated by selfishness in varying degrees. Either emotional or material. If all that's involved in doing something nets ME nothing but pain and material loss, I'm not hugely motivated to pursue such interests. Are you?

Thus, OUR reasons for pursuing a special-needs adoption had to be either:

1. naiveté (didn't know it would cost us)
2. foolishness (were taking risks we should have know better than to take)
3. Motivated by something outside of ourselves that is capable of superseding our selfish human bent (We are Christ's slaves).

Through CHASK, we heard about a little boy who had been born with Heterotaxy Syndrome and Asplenia. Because of that, he had an unbalanced Atrio Ventricular Septal defect with Pulmonary Atresia. Put more simply, he had only two chambers in his heart rather than the four of a healthy human heart. In addition, he did not have the pulmonary artery which carries blood from the heart to the lungs. He was placed on full life support soon after he was born, and at four days old he had the first of several prospective open-heart surgeries.

Since the baby's birth-parents had decided to give him up for adoption before he was born, he did not yet have a name, and our family chose the name Samuel David. Samuel means "asked of God," and David means "Beloved." Even as we prepared to adopt Sammy, we knew he might die before we could ever see him. In an article I wrote for NATHHAN/CHASK News, it records a bit of conversation between myself and Samuel's social-worker:

“Her [the social worker's] final question to me was the shock-to-commitment that I needed. She asked me, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how committed are you to this baby?" I paused for a moment to check my heart, and then responded, "10! He's ours. We'll be coming down to get him, even

if it means bringing him home for a funeral here."

Although we were committed to Samuel, even if he died, we could not have completely prepare ourselves for that very real possibility.

The casket looked so small, sitting at the front of the church, a large bouquet of purple lilacs standing close to it. I guess Samuel didn't need a very large one though; he wasn't quite four months old when he died. There was not a dry eye in the crowded church that morning as Kevin told of Samuel's going to be with the Lord. While in Spokane, preparing for the second open heart surgery, Samuel went into cardiac arrest. The medical staff worked on him for close to an hour, but couldn't keep his heart going on its own for more than fifteen seconds at a time. In addition, the acid levels in his blood had risen to the point that Samuel would be brain dead, even if the doctors could get his heart to beat. We told him goodbye, and allowed the doctors to stop the CPR. (*End of this quote.*)

Jessica writes: Given that so much time, money, and emotion are involved in adopting a developmentally disabled child, what about other children a family may already have? Jim and Jerri Unruh had eight children before they adopted Julia. Relatives and hospital staff could not understand why they would adopt someone like Julia. Jim writes, "We have heard things like, 'how can you do this to yourselves and your family' 'isn't there someone else who can raise "it".

Julia's new siblings don't feel that way. They love to cuddle and kiss their little sister. Even four-year-old Lily knows that Julia is different from other children. While other children should certainly be considered when thinking about adopting a disabled child, they should not automatically be considered a reason against adopting. Adopting a child with disabilities can be a blessing to the whole family.

Adopting won't make you rich. You may be able to receive some financial aid, or like the Brenemans, you may end up spending thousands of dollars. You will have to adjust your schedule in order to meet the physical needs of your child. You may pour yourself into an adoption, only for things to end. The disability may be more than you can handle, and you may

have to send the child back, or, like Sammy, a child with a life-threatening condition may die.

Even though adopting disabled children may cost much in terms of money and time, many families who have adopted special-needs children would not give them back. In an article on Adoption Online, Joan Leof writes, "families who have adopted such [disabled] children talk about the 'incredible joy' the children bring to them.. They describe them as having enriched their families in ways they could never have imagined." Speaking of Julia, Jerri Unruh says "She's mine. God placed her here . . . I'm so blessed by her every day."

Will it be worth it for you to adopt a disabled child? It probably won't if you are looking for material benefits. However, you may find that the spiritual blessings are more than you could have imagined.

Jerri Unruh shares, "When we first considered adopting Julia, I was convinced that we needed her as much (or more) than she needed us. Would I adopt Julia again, knowing all that we would go through? Absolutely!"

Kris writes about their choosing adoption again: "I guess I'm hoping that our reasons to adopt a child with special needs are motivated by reasons outside of ourselves, and that we weren't naive or foolish regarding the possible outcomes. Using my spiritual glasses, here's how our family has benefited and why we're going down this path again with Aiden.

1. God was glorified - by our obedience and submission to His Will for us.
2. Our suffering and sacrifice in this present world (according to God's Will) results in laying up treasures in heaven for us and glory to God (the achievement of God's ultimate purpose for us) as demonstrated by Christ's example.
3. Our children (and perhaps others around us) have seen Christ's sacrificial love demonstrated in real life - both the pain and agony involved in suffering, and Christ's very real power to carry us through this pain with our faith intact and growing stronger through the trials.
4. Living out, in real life, a practical expres-



sion that demonstrates the inherent worth of every human being is a strong, counter-cultural statement, although not one I would have willingly chosen to make of my own volition. It costs us, but I am convinced that God is glorified through this blatant testimony. It could not be otherwise. If I am not convinced of this, I will not have the strength to follow through.

There are opportunities - humanly speaking - to turn and walk away from our current commitment to little Aiden. But to do so would fly in the face of our personal convictions, which were cemented in place through thorough study of God's Word. In other words, if we walk away from Aiden now, it would be to disown Christ and what God's Word tells us about our purpose in this world, the reason we were purchased at so dear a price (to do the works that God has prepared for us to do as slaves of Christ). For us it would be turning our backs on the full truth of God's Word regarding the value of human life. Wow.

How humbling to recognize that it is God's strength alone that keeps us moving forward day by day through all of the trials and adversities associated with caring for someone who is "broken and worthless" in the eyes of the world.

We are not a "poster-family" for special-needs adoption. I can no longer say that every-

one should be adopting as we are choosing to do. The pain of Sam's loss is VERY real, and I would not willingly subject myself, or my children, to this kind of pain repeatedly. It would be rank foolishness to do so.

Neither would I counsel others to take such risk of finances, time and emotional hardship, unless God was telling them to do so through the study of His Word.

Thinking of adopting a child with special needs?

I believe the principles are there in Scripture, the ones that tell us to value human life (EVERY life) as God-created and God-ordained, and that we are to serve God by being used of Him as His Hands and Feet to those around us.

I believe that if we follow Him and His Word, He will bless us for it (though more likely the blessings won't be realized until we're finished laboring on this earth).

The costs are so much greater than any felt-reward in the here and now. It would be interesting to hear a non-Christian's rationale for adopting or fostering special-needs kids. Evolution decries our efforts as illogical at best, and would more likely attribute them to some emotional rationalewhich is shaky ground to stand on when caring for the child gets hard - and it WILL get hard!"

(Editor's note: Reading about these different families who choose to support life (all life!) shows that there are Christians putting shoe leather on their convictions. This whole concept of adopting a child with special needs and forgoing physical and emotional comfort, is stunning for hurting birth parents facing an adverse pregnancy diagnosis. Their answer to being pregnant with a "fetus" with medical problems, especially genetic, is relief through pregnancy termination or "choice". (Certainly not the baby's choice!)

Not every Christian is called to adopt a child with special needs. But every Christian is called to minister to orphans. (James 1:27). How are you putting shoe leather to your strong pro-life conviction?

Nina Glazebrook's Story



Nina Glazebrook

I pray the Lord is blessing you and your family as you minister to these families in need. I know that you love the Lord and so I wanted to share with you what great things He has done. We pray the Lord will be glorified through our sweet Nina and that His name will be lifted up.

Mr. Donnelly, an adoption attorney in California, with the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys www.adoptionattorneys.org www.ACAL.org contacted the CHASK office. Ruth at CHASK let me know I should give him a call. He spoke to me about Anna who was pregnant and due soon. She was homeless and had been staying with a family friend. He told us about her life, that she had a daily heroin habit as well as many other street and prescription drugs. She also drank a pint of vodka a day. She had a long medical file which he sent to us. She is Hep C positive and also on anti-depressants. The last trimester she went on methadone.

We listened and then prayed about it and felt we would like to talk to her. We arranged to call her. She and I had a wonderful conversation. She was very sweet and told me about her life and her other 3 chil-

dren. I was able to encourage her and let her know we cared about her and her baby. She was very nervous, but at the end of the conversation she seemed to relax. We agreed to come to Santa Barbara and meet her. We met at a park. I brought her a Bible devotional and some things for her time in the hospital. We brought our girls and they played in the park while we talked. She brought pictures of the ultrasound of her baby girl. The Lord was really gracious and gave us a sweet time of sharing. I wanted her to know that we were happy to have come to Santa Barbara and met her and to have been able to encourage her. She had been living on the street and had been in a relationship with a man who beat her all the time. She had gotten away from him, but she felt alone. Her boys lived there in SB with her mom. She was estranged from her mom and did not have contact with her sons. (After Nina was born and Anna was in the hospital, her oldest son (17) called her. She was so happy to talk to him.)

The Lord gave me such a love for her and a heart of compassion for all that she had been through. We went back home and she said she would be in contact with us and let us know when the baby was coming. She had had all her other babies early and with only 2 or 3 hours of labor, so we did not think we would make it for the birth. She told us she really wanted us to be there.

Three weeks after our meeting, Anna called to say she was in labor. It was 2 weeks before her due date. We threw everything into the car and took off. It takes about 5 hours to get to Santa Barbara from our house. When we got there she was still in labor and had been

pushing for awhile. The baby was in distress and so they decided to do a c-section.

Nina was born on March 11, 2010. I had the blessing of being there. She was so small and so beautiful. We all fell in love with her instantly.

About 48 hours later she began her withdrawal from the alcohol and drugs. She had a really hard time and it was very hard to watch her shake and cry. She had to be under the lights for her liver and the doctor decided to medicate her as she was unable to eat or sleep. She was in the hospital 5 days.



Baby Nina under lights in the hospital

While I was there visiting with Anna she told me what had been happening before Nina was born. She had tried to abort her twice. The first time she was sent home because her iron count was too low. The second time she was in the room waiting for the doctor, and she felt strongly that she should leave and so she walked out. God had a plan for our little angel and He kept her safe. Anna told me that she decided that the reason she was having this baby was to place her with a lesbian/gay couple. She found 2 men that she really liked and agreed with them to place her baby with them. They were involved in an alternative lifestyle which involved rock music and following groups around. She wanted her daughter to grow up to follow these groups around because she felt her daughter would get free stuff and have someone to look after her. These two men had agreed to that.

About a week before we met Anna these two men had backed out of the agreement because of the risk of the baby being born with special needs. Anna was devastated and went on a 2 week drinking binge. She was hopeless and did not want to place her baby with a Christian straight couple. When a few more couples backed out she

was afraid no one would adopt her baby. When Mr. Donnelly told her about us, she was not that excited, but did agree to meet us. She said when she was with us she realized that "we had God

all around us". She said we brought such peace with us and she wanted her daughter to have that, so she changed her mind and agreed to place with us. She said she watched our 2 daughters playing at the park where we met and she could not believe how happy and loving they were. She had never been around that kind of peace. I told

her that it was not us, but the Lord, that gave true peace. I was able to share with her while in the hospital. I do not know how much of it she really understood, but I did give her some things to read. She gave me an address and phone number to get in touch with her, but sadly, a few weeks after we were home we found out that she went back on the street. I don't know if we will



Little Nina with her big sisters

be able to find her again. I think of her often. Nina looks very much like her.

Our sweet baby girl is doing better now. She had a very hard time for the first 4 or 5 months. She could not go out of the house as it was way too stimulating. We had to darken a room and keep white noise on all the time. My husband and I took turns going out, but I really never left the house those first 3 months. She eats very little at a time and is very oral defensive. Now, at 8 months, she can drink 3 ounces at a time, but before that it was 1 or 2 ounces every hour. She has not gained weight very well. She is only just gotten to 14lbs at almost 9 months. She is delayed in her fine motor and cognitive skills, but seems to be nearly on track with gross motor. We are still waiting to see what challenges she will face, but she is the sweetest and happiest baby. What a blessing and

joy she is to us. We love her so much. We can not believe how good God has been to bring her to us. Every day we are amazed at how much joy and love she gives. Our older daughters just adore her and they are so good with her.

We are constantly stopped and asked about her when we go out with her. People find out that we are adopting her and they ask about her as she has the most captivating eyes. I say, "Would you like to hear what God has done?" And then I can give a testimony to the great grace and goodness of God. I think Nina's story is the gospel. We were lost and worthless to the world, but God reached down and saved us for no reason, but just that he loved us. Thank you for letting us share this. God has used your ministry to bring our sweet Nina to us. Thank you for all your faithfulness to these dear, precious children. God Bless you and your family, Larry, Nancy, Lily, Amy and Nina



The Glazebrook Family

Home School Legal Defense

A Request for Homeschool Friendly Professionals

Home School Legal Defense is seeing a growing need among HSLDA members for support for families who are homeschooling children with special needs. Our Special Needs Department has three coordinators available for consultation who frequently assist members with issues directly related to homeschooling children with special needs.

HSLDA understands that parents may need help in educating their children with special needs. Our coordinators often provide homeschooling families with names of educational consultants, therapists, tutors, testers, counselors, educational diagnosticians, and other experts.

When members contact our office to request referrals, we use our consultant database to search for consultants who will best suit their needs.

We are seeking to expand our database to include more home school-friendly psychologists, educational consultants and professionals who specialize in working with special needs children.

If you have recommendations for specialists who fit this need, and who you think would like to be a part of our consultant database, please send us their contact information, as well as any details about their services.

Elizabeth LaRock - HSLDA Special Needs Department - Home School Legal Defense Association
 Attn: Special Needs Consultant Database
 P.O. Box 3000 Purcellville, Virginia 20134
 Phone: (540) 338-5600 Fax: (540) 338-2733

Email: elizabethl@hsllda.org

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NATHHAN / CHASK Resource Room



Christian Homes And Special Kids - Warmly penned, written for parents by parents, with a goal in mind...to raise children with disabilities, who love the Lord. This is a great book to share with new moms, or parents who are facing giving birth to a child with special needs. It is realistic, encouraging and full of a feeling of "Welcome to the world of disability, it's not so bad!"

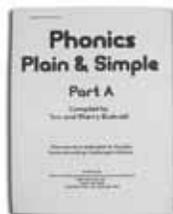
By Sherry Bushnell and Diane Ryckman.....~~\$17.00~~

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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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FREE MATH LESSONS

I just wanted to drop a quick note to tell you about a new website that makes learning math fun and easy. There are over 28 hours of video tutorials, and hundreds of printed worksheets. I have included a link for free lessons.

<http://americasmathteacher.com>

Home school parents are very excited about this program, they say it's like having a personal math tutor available 24/7!

All About Spelling

I've been using the All About Spelling program with my two children for about 2 years.

All About Spelling (www.AllAboutSpelling.com) is a step-by-step multisensory program that helps struggling spellers. It has made a huge difference in our homeschool!

.....

Christian Birth Doula

I just wanted to let your group know about my services as a Christian birth doula. I definitely support your ministry, and would help mothers and families who face daunting decisions surrounding pregnancy, birth, and beyond, with special needs children. I also support homeschooling. If you know of anyone who could use help in their birth, or pregnancy with support and caretaker referrals, please let me know.

Bethany Russell, Certified Birth Doula (AVIVA)
Phone: (216) 459-9148
email: doulabethany@yahoo.com

(A birth doula is a person trained and experienced in child-birth who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the mother before, during and just after child-birth.)

.....

www.comeunity.com

Adoption, Special Needs and Parenting Support - This outstanding parenting site provides hundreds of definitive articles, resource directories, expert interviews and exclusive book reviews on parenting, adoption and children's special needs.

.....

Sing-To –Speak for SALE

Hi, I came across one of your postings about sing to speak cds. I purchased sing to socialize and sing to tell you how I feel a couple of years ago for my son who has down syndrome/autism. They ARE still available at www.precisionsongs.com. I would be interested in selling my used copies to anyone who is interested, I have the sing to socialize cd. and the sing to tell you how I feel book/cd. Both in great condition.

Thanks,
Monica Ingalls
grace2uboooboo@yahoo.com

www.Kindermusik ByTheBrainTrain.com

Book Review: **Managing A Special Needs Trust: A Guide for Trustees**

This is a completely revised, updated, and expanded edition of Special Needs Trust Administration Manual: A Guide for Trustees (2004, 2005). Even though earlier editions focused on Massachusetts laws and procedures, over 10,000 copies were purchased by parents, family members, and professionals across the USA. The authors have done much more than change the name.

“Readers of the previous editions will notice one major change...this book applies to all states...we cover uniform statutes that have been adopted in most states. We also focus on the rules of major federal benefit programs that provide cash, medical benefits, and housing subsidies to people with disabilities.”

Managing a Special Needs Trust: A Guide for Trustees is an easy-to-understand reference guide for parents, individuals with disabilities, family members and advocates as well as attorneys, financial planners, tax advisers, social workers and educators—anyone who is managing a special needs trust and/or working with families on future planning for a family member with a disability.

This 242-page book clearly explains how special needs trusts relate to the complicated public benefit programs that assist people with disabilities. This book tells how to:

* Understand the rules of major public programs that provide cash, medical care, and housing assistance to a family member with a disability.

* Use practical strategies to pay for items and services that an individual needs without reducing public benefits. <http://www.disabilitiesbooks.com>



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Forget-Me-Not... Children From Liberia...

By Tanya Pruitt

I thought I would first start off telling you that writing an article, raising lots of kids (18 at home adopted and ten grown), home schooling, and traveling to Africa are ALL out of my comfort zone! I have a tendency to be shy, have difficult traveling and am not terribly organized. Oh and lets not even talk about my lack of energy.

But I serve a mighty God who has called me into some amazing ministries and I am trusting in HIS power.

In July of 2006 I traveled to Liberia to pick up our four children we were adopting. We stayed with missionaries during that time that fostered special needs children. For a week they told me about the plight of the special needs children in Liberia, Africa. How the Liberian people consider them a curse and usually abandon them or worse, murder them. I first hand was able to witness the life changing results that had happened at the hand of these missionaries that took in special needs children, loving them, praying over them and believing for their future.

When I left Liberia with my four precious children, I felt a huge tug on my heart to help the special needs children in Liberia, Africa. As I began to share my heart with Donna Barber (the stateside adoption coordinator from the organization I adopted from), she shared that her heart was being torn in the same direction. Shortly after that her attempt to adopt a special needs child failed when the child died. Her heart became even more determined to help Liberia's special needs children. She quit her job and soon began the process of starting her own organization. Now she is the director of Global Orphan Outreach, the umbrella over Forget-Me-Not Children's Homes.

Unknown to me at the time God was tugging at other adoptive parents' hearts including Christina Hoffman (the director of Forget-Me-Not) to join the cause. In the process of adoption a baby from Liberia she was soon to find out that he had cerebral palsy. Her treatment of her own son in the coming year would open up the teaching program for our foster homes.

At first we felt that God was leading us to open an orphanage but the doors continually closed. We now know that God was leading us in another direction. He knew that these special children needed so much more than an orphanage setting. They needed one on one care. A pastor in Liberia (who works with us now) had already established a ministry of Liberian foster parents taking care of their own. With his help, the idea started forming about training foster parents in Liberia for our special needs kids. Foster care could open up so many doors for the ministry. The Liberian people could see the value of handicapped children in their homes. And in turn, by loving the foster families we could show them the love of Christ for them and the children they were caring for. And last but not least, we could provide income for an impoverished family.

After just two short months of our program we began to witness miracles. A two-year-old boy was found in a hospital, abandoned and alone. By looking at his picture he appeared to be dead. He just laid there without expression, movement or hope. Now he is laughing, affectionate and he lights up in the arms of his foster mother.





Same 2 yr old with foster mom, now happy and smiling

A three-year-old little deaf boy, sad and withdrawn, looked isolated and alone. While visiting Liberia last April we attended a church that had a woman signing to the congregation. We were so amazed and quickly asked her if she could teach our little one.

A two-year-old little girl in an orphanage dying of failure to thrive. In our program in a few short months she is gaining weight, laughing and playing.



A little boy born in a village with sever deformities of his feet and hands. Rejected by everyone he was taken into our medical outreach program and is on his way to the U.S for medical treatment.

A four-year-old who could not hold her head up or eat. When I weighed her she was only ten pounds. We bought her formula, cereal and vitamins and she has gained 6 pounds and is attempting to crawl. We are working on a medical visa for her to come to the United States.

Holding these children in my arms, seeing them smiling and happy brought such joy to my soul. It also confirmed that Jesus had led the way.

"...For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future..."

Jeremiah 29:11

Although many things have already been accomplished in the Forget-Me-Not program there is so much left to do. Many children still lay abandoned in feeding centers, hospitals and in villages with no hope of ever having a future.

Many children will die without getting expensive medical treatment that can only be accomplished in the United States. Sponsored children in our outreach programs will simply die of starvation and disease.

So my prayers is that Jesus will lay on your hearts the same desire to help "the least of these" as he has pressed on mine.

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

IN HIM

Forget-Me-Not Children's Homes

Tanya Pruitt

RonTanya777@aol.com

www.globalorphanoutreach.com

forgetmenotchildrenshomes.blogspot.com



No Perfect Church

JoAnn Harder-Lang

Here I share a part of my heart and family experience in hopes that you will be encouraged in Christ. Just a little back ground so this makes



sense. We were in our mid 30's and our children's dis(abilities) included DS and spinal TB. At the time of this experience, we had 9 children and 1 teenage foster daughter.

Recently a friend called to tell me about something wonderful that had

happened at church and how the Lord used her. She went on to explain that a young family with a son who has autism had come to worship at her church. However, the pastor explained how the church wasn't really equipped for their child's special needs. Overhearing this, my friend opened her heart for this family (as Christ wants us all to do) and offered to be a one-on-one for this little boy. I told her God will bless her...and thank you! Yes, folks, there are caring people in the body of Christ, people who don't just read the Bible, but live by it.

When asked to write this article, I wasn't sure where it was going. I felt a bit like Moses must have felt when delivering the Ten Commandments to the Hebrew people. I am happy to share not only our family's story, but those of others as well in the same boat.

In deciding to walk down our life-path of raising special needs children, it never occurred to our family that we would become unwanted and unwelcome in a church. After all, God created our children and they belong to him. Because God includes our children we assumed so would the church, however that has not always been the case. How could a "true" Christian turn us away from a place of worship, a house of God because our child was different?

Our first encounter was at a church we had attended for quite some time. My husband knew the senior pastor on a personal level because of his job. We were comfortable and enjoyed the fellowship and worship. We had no idea that our world was about to be turned upside down.

It was a beautiful spring morning. You could feel the warmth of the sun's rays dancing through the kitchen window. Outside the birds sang sweetly and the aroma of my husband's morning coffee swirled through the house tempting every nose it came in contact with. About half hour before we would be ready to leave the phone rang. This was unusual because we seldom received phone calls on Sunday morning. I answered the phone with a chipper hello and the voice on the other end of the line sounded distressed, it was our assistant pastor's wife. As she cleared her throat she squeezed out a "Hello...Jo Ann, this is Mrs. "I said, "Good morning!" She went on to let me know that we would need to make other arrangements for our son on Sundays or not attend. Due to my state of shock and disbelief I simply said "Oh, okay." I hung up the phone.

My husband not having a clue what had just transpired on the phone came in from feeding the cows and asked if we were ready to go? I burst into tears, (poor man; he didn't know why he received such a response.) I tried to compose myself but with each word I managed to get out, a burst of sobbing followed. After a few minutes I was able to tell the whole short story of the unexpected Sunday morning phone call. My husband too was shocked and couldn't believe our regular/senior pastor could possibly know about this situation. However, we agreed to stay home with our son versus finding him some place to be on Sunday morning other than at church with the rest of his family.

Two weeks passed as did the shock, pain,

anger and disbelief of that dreadful phone call.

The senior pastor called and asked if everything was okay? He hadn't seen us at church and wanted to know how we were doing. I told him not well and that I would put my husband on the phone to explain. The pain was still too great and fresh to have to repeat the story, even as short as it was.

After my husband got off the phone he commented that it was just as he thought, our senior pastor knew nothing of the incident and welcomed our family back to church. He added that the assistant pastor's wife had no authority to tell us what she had said and that wasn't the feeling of the church body, just her opinion. With much relief we began attending church service again. We didn't give up.

Years later and after the closing of the church we had attended for several years we began attending a new place of worship. On Mothers Day 2005 our new pastor asked for all the Mothers in the congregation to come forward to the alter to be prayed over. As he spoke he told a story about a Mother (Mary) and these words I will never forget: how would you treat your child if he were the son of God? That one short simple sentence made a profound impression that I carry in my heart to this day. If only all pastors and their congregation would do the same our churches would be a better place, a welcoming place, a place Jesus spoke of in the book of Matthew. "Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me." Then these righteous ones will reply, Lord, when did we ever see

you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? "And the king will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,*you were doing it to me!'" NLT

You see, it's really not about either the pastor's wife's attitude or our son's special needs, it's really about how we treat others, especially those who Jesus pointed out in Matthew 25: 34-40 Families with special needs children are thirsty, thirsty for the cool water of life that only Christ can give. They are hungry, hungry for the word of God. They are imprisoned by isolation when they are unaccepted at church or simply told that the church is not equipped for these kinds of kids.

The Bible tells us in James 2:17 "So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless." Faith without works is dead. When Paul wrote the book of Romans he spoke of Abraham. Romans 4:18 Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping- Romans 4:19 And Abraham's faith did not weaken-"Romans 4:20-21 Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.

Like Father Abraham, our family never gave up. We continued attending church and educating those who were unknowledgeable of persons with special needs. The Bible tells us to meet together as believers and to encourage one another. Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. NIV

When you give up on attending church the unity of the body, your own spiritual growth, protection and blessings are all at risk when you're disconnected/not attending church from the body of Christ. Christ's body is made of many parts, yet it is still one unified entity. 1 Corinthians 12:12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. NIV

1 Corinthians 12:14-23 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not

for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. NIV The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. NIV You see, we are the body, your local church needs you!

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. Unity in the body of Christ does not mean total conformity and uniformity. NIV Although maintaining unity in the body is very important, it is also vital to value the unique qualities that make each of us an individual "part" of the body. Both aspects, unity and individuality, deserve emphasis and appreciation. This makes for a healthy church body, Christ is our common denominator, and he makes us one.

Each of you reading this article today will perhaps come to know that you are a necessary "part" of your local church. You have gifts and talents that are needed. Even though one church may turn your family away, don't give up! Abraham didn't and by keeping his faith he glorified God.

Currently, our family is anticipating the adoption of a precious little girl who has Spina Bifida. We attend a small multi cultural church with many loving, caring people. However, we are looking for another place to worship. We have no concerns our daughter would be accepted, in fact she would be welcomed with open arms. The difficulty we face is that our church's children's church is located in the basement. Sadly, this area of our church is not handicap accessible.

In times of doubt and painful responses from others, we need to trust God and rely on his word.

We need to motivate each other to acts of love and good works. Hebrews 10:24 NLT We need to trust God to keep his promise Hebrews 10:23 and we need not neglect meeting together. Hebrews 10:25

Don't give up looking for a house of worship anymore than you would give up on your child. Christian aren't perfect, churches aren't perfect. We must educate those who are unaware of or unknowledgeable of special needs, otherwise you are missing an opportunity to share with others and to help them to really get to know your child. Sit in on your child's class. Offer to help once a month in your child's class. As you do these things you will be unnoticeably educating those around you.

I hope that in some way this article has encouraged you or someone you know. Blessings~
Jo Ann

Resources for the family:

The book I mentioned at the beginning of this article, "Unto the Least of These: Special Education in the Church- Andrew H. Wood. ISBN 9780872270992 is available at Amazon.com for \$ 5.06

I also highly recommend a children's Christmas DVD by Max Lucado titled; The Crippled Lamb. This truly is a must see at anytime of the year. It can be purchased at Christian Book Distributor/CBD 1-800- 247-4784 the item number is; WW301734 and is only \$4.99

Here is a book written by me to help families adopting children with different nationalities than their own. Author: Jo Ann Harder-Lang Transracial Adoptions, A Mothers Documentary of Racism, Injustice & Joy

My Email: RTRIBE2000@aol.com

Supporting Families who Have Children with Disability

By Sherry Bushnell

Have you ever listened to someone express to you in great concern.....

“You must be such a special person to be able to care for a child like this....”

“I could never do what you are doing...”

“God has a special reward for you in heaven.”

“How can you be sure that God has called you to take this extra responsibility (read burden) on with your family’s present needs”

“If you adopt a child who has his or her parents bad qualities through genetics, you will reap the parent’s punishment.”

“How do you know that you will be able to financially handle a child with so many medical problems?”

“The time required to help a child with disability does not fit into our life-style.”

These are all comments that we as a family have gotten over the years. Some of them are sad, some are out-right funny.

Most are just an honest communication of thoughts many people have about adopting or raising a child with special needs.

A child that is born to us with a medical need, is still our child, first. Our love doesn’t diminish in the face of surgery, bad behavior we don’t understand, seizures or other trials. In fact, we come even more tender and protective.

A child that is adopted is often given a special part of our heart. A different love that is

just as strong as a birth mother’s, equally as protective and nurturing.

How can we provide support to families who are raising children with disability?

The first quality we love to see in people is an ability to overlook. Overlook our absence at church or meetings or gatherings when we are exhausted, overwhelmed.

Overlook behavior of our children caused by over-stimulation, feeling sick (again), pain or frustration.

Overlook table manners that are less than ideal because of lack of coordination.

Overlook comments by our child who has a lack of social graces and calls attention to smells, sounds, and sights that interest them.

The second quality we love to see in folks who would like to support us in caring for our children who are disabled is understanding. It is amazing just how much comfort we as parents get from other adults who can relate to us. Have you experienced a day when you have tried to get things done and at the end of the day, nothing is really accomplished?

Some days are like that. We need to hear that we aren’t the only ones out there who are spinning their wheels.

Provide opportunities to be normal. Depending on our child’s needs, we can feel like a side-show everywhere we go. We still like to be invited, even if we cannot come. Don’t stop asking. Just knowing you care enough to call or ask sends a huge message that, “We love you!”

When our children were younger, it was extra special to have another couple come over and place games with our family. If we had to quit or change activity because the children were needing something different, we’d feel like it was just part

of the evening.

Many families, with children that have disability, struggle with feelings of failure. Parenting a child that is a challenge can be a huge confidence buster. Skills practiced at home can help a parent be brave enough to venture out, then viola! Suddenly behavior never before displayed until eating out, causes us to make a hasty exit. This unpredictable quality of our children can make parenting harder. Some parents even feel abandoned by God. Being tested to the utmost, as we search for ways to help our children grow into the person the Lord has meant them to be, is scary. The “What-if’s” are killer. What if, for instance, our child will not be able to care for themselves at all? Who will care for them when we die?

Struggling families need their church family to comfort and support them during times of trial. When churches do this, they mirror our Heavenly Father, who is caring for us with arms carefully enfolding us and catching each tear. Life’s harsh realities can be softened when we as fellow believers make differences by caring.

We appreciate prayer. Please pray for strength and patience. Our job is never ending and we sometimes lack an ability to see past the present.

Please pray for grace and mercy. We want to grow spiritually, just like you do. Pray that the Lord uses each experience and challenges and a point of growth for us.

Please pray for God’s truth to be revealed in the face of Satan’s taunts and attacks. He knows how to bring us down. You can pray that our spiritual eyes will be opened and we will be made stronger, by the grace of God.

Please pray that we will have our ears attuned to the Living God and that we will be able to see areas we can help our children grow and live more fully.

Consider ideas such as:

Respite Care: no matter how committed and loving parent can be, sometimes a break is needed just to regroup. If a child is able to be safe and happy with a sitter, consider donating an evening of story reading, bubble bath, and easy games while mom and dad have a few precious hours out.

If the parent cannot afford it, pay for their meal too! They will never forget your kindness.

Make a meal or two. Letting the family know that it is your turn to cook, no strings attached, and no company required, is a really nice way to say.. I am thinking of you. Call first and arrange a good day to bring the meal over. Check for any dietary needs. Make the dinner and then leave... unless of course the family is desperate for care and encouragement then you better stay.

Do shopping or errands. Take the other children to the library with you when you go with your own.

Offer to do laundry. It is a day that sheets need to be changed? Offer to take them all home in a big bag, wash them, and return them, even offering to put them back on! This is a huge task for some moms.

Yard work, cleaning house... some women welcome this, others are very embarrassed about how behind they are. Be sensitive.

Look around. Pray about how to help. Your love will be touching and considered a special part of their lives. Even if they are so overwhelmed that they cannot think of anything right that moment for you to do. Ask them to call you.

Financial assistance. Difficulty making ends meet can accompany a family that has to meet insurance co-payments or medication not covered. If it is a birthday, or other holiday such as Christmas, giving a gift may be totally appreciated, if you know they are struggling.

Paying attention to the family God has

Letters From Families

the money would come from for an



McKenzie children, with new little sister Alexandria

Dear CHASK families,

We have been trying for over five years to adopt a child or children. We had some offered to us, but the foster parents had a change of heart at the last minute. During that time I had lost three babies of my own, two miscarriages and two ectopic pregnancies.

It was a rough road. It was very hard to wonder if we were ever going to be able to adopt. We felt many times like God was leading us that way. He knew my heart.

A lesson we have learned: you have to trust in Him all the way. It gets hard at times but we have to just believe, and give all our pain to God. I had been looking and looking at all kinds of adoptions. We just wanted to open our home to some one who needed it, and love that child for who he or she is, raising them for the Lord. I wish I could remember how I stumbled upon the CHASK web site. Every day I would look to see what children where on there. I would pray for the children to find a good home. Then I came across this baby and talked to my husband. I asked him if we should we try for this little baby that needed a home. We prayed about it. We had no idea where

the money would come from for an adoption. We prayed about that. The time was getting closer and closer for the birth mom's due date. Then God, the wonderful, powerful, God that He is, opened the door. And He has not yet stopped. We met the birth mom, dad and grandparents and they were all so wonderful. They were also very heart broken. It was tearing at me and I felt bad. The birth mom changed her mind a couple times, making this even harder on us.

We prayed that God would tell us if he wanted us to place this baby back with her.. And to please tell us soon... We felt God still saying, "This baby belongs with you."

The birth mom had emailed me and said she was glad that we got to take the baby home. And that it is so hard to let her baby go, even though she knows she is in a good loving home. We understood that the birth mom changing her mind so many times, was not any thing she was doing wrong, it is just such a very hard place for these mothers. She honestly could not care for this baby. We just lovingly sympathized with her and supported her in her decision either way.

We pray for her and her family every single day, that God will help her change her life and heal her heart. It is a happy ending. Here is a drug baby that had narcotics up till the last month. Yet she is very healthy and happy. She is a very good baby above all of that.

We truly have been blessed by God. I feel He lead us to her, so that we can also help the birth mother and her family come closer to God. I know that this birth mom was praying as well. I just want to say, "Thank you CHASK for all that you do."

Adoption is a roller coaster at times but it is all worth it in the end. Even if that means you only get to love that child for a little while. If you loved him or her and prayed for that child, that is a great thing, my friend. I look forward to some day opening my home to another child that needs a good, loving home. God bless you.

Lisa McKenzie

Ayanna's Puzzle



It's with HUGE joy that I tell you that our 6 month old flew to Seattle the last part of August....Ayanna Simone is now "home". She spent 3 weeks at Seattle Children's Hospital for awhile, but we're not at All Children's Hospital in Florida anymore...

For those of you that don't know our adoption story I will share with you...our adoption journey started 4 years ago when we were all ready for a baby....we waited and waited and nothing came of it...we signed up with Betty @ A Little Bit of Heaven and then things started to really happen... but me being impatient and wanting a baby right now we found a birth mom ourselves and the birthmother and her 2 yr old came from FL to live with us and she delivered a beautiful healthy baby girl.....and chose to parent her, so we were all so crushed.

Then a year later we heard about an older child from a disrupted adoption and we started that process, but after 5 months he went back to his disrupted home as it wasn't a good fit with our family....so this whole time I am thinking "why isn't this happening" and I kept hearing over & over it will happen when GOD says you're ready....

This last May I was at work in the ER when my cell phone rang. The voice on the other end says to me.... "Hello, Teresa are you still looking to adopt?"

I said, "Yes" and she says a AA baby girl was born with severe special needs.... and I said "O.K.". And then voice on the other end said, "Do you understand? Severe special needs." And I said "Ok, I heard



you...I want her...." So I told her that I would call her back at the end of my shift and get all of her information. I called the lady and told her again that we wanted her... She told me that she would start the process....and it's now 4 months later and she is amazing....she was born with Vactral Syndrome, which means no anus, one functioning kidney, and her female organs aren't all hooked up. She was also born with severe tracheomalacia. She has had 4 major surgeries thus far and is doing better, but we have a long road ahead of us.

She just recently got a new trach and is not having anymore "death spells". She has the most amazing temperament and personality it's such a blessing....It was so hard getting the approvals to have her medically air-lifted to Seattle....

Just a quick note. I had to call the Gov. of Florida and he helped a lot....

As of today, November 22, 2010 she is doing so wonderful! She has nursing care that comes in and helps me so I can sleep and get some work done. She is now 16 pounds & 26" inches long. She is only on the CPAP at night just to keep her airway open and give her the support that she needs to rest and grow...and that she is doing! She now has a bottom tooth and is slobbering like a full grown St. Bernard. She is scheduled to have her next big surgery which is called a total urogenital mobilization the first part of January. The team of surgeons that will be doing the surgery say that it's a very long surgery, so please continue to send your prayers.....as they are so appreciated.

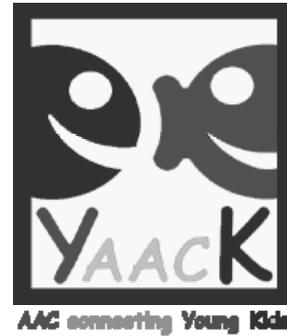
I took her out in the snow today and she wasn't too sure she liked it, but she loves

to look out the window and watch it fall.....She is still just a happy baby...and she is moving sound thru the trach which is such a wonderful thing.... We see Dr. Andy on the 7th of December for the modified passeymuir valve, so we are excited to hear her roar.....

Ayanna now has her own blog that an amazing friend that has adopted 10 beautiful kids help me build. Now you all could see her and read how she is doing.

On her blog there is a puzzle that we are selling pieces of, for \$1.00 each. You are welcome to buy more than one piece if you chose, but please help us pass the link around to all that you know interested in helping us. That would be so great.....the funds raised from the puzzle will go to Heart of Adoption to finalize her adoption..... I want to thank each of you for taking the time to read "our story"...and wish you all blessings.....and the moral of our story is God will provide and answer your prayers we just have to ask him and be patient.....here is the link.....PLEASE pass on to all of your friends, church family, and your facebook friends, and anyone else that you can think of....and we'd love to hear your adoption story too.....after all we are all ONE family.....
www.ayannaspuzzle.blogspot.com

Thank you all & many blessing!!!!
Sam, Teresa, Cameron, & Ayanna Taylor



What is YAACK?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Connecting Young Kids (YAACK) is a website that covers issues related to AAC and young children. Its purpose is to provide information and guidance to families, teachers, speech/language pathologists and anyone else who is involved with a child with special communication needs. It is intended to be easy to understand and practical, and to cover a wide range of topics dealing with AAC and AAC-related issues of children at various ages and stages of communication ability, and with different strengths, disabilities and learning characteristics.

QUICK START

YAACK is based on the premise that the purpose of AAC is to assist the child in attaining the quality of life that approaches the level of satisfaction and meaningfulness that would have been possible if the child did not have a communication disability. Therefore, the child's ability to communicate when, where and what is desired is the goal; AAC is just the means. YAACK emphasizes the individuality of each child, and stresses the fact that there is no single solution or set of procedures that will work for every child. Success depends on really getting to know and understand the child, and then developing and implementing a communication program that takes into account his unique characteristics.

aac.unl.edu/yaack

Out of the mouth of a child...

“I have to share something with CHASK, this is out the mouth of my son. I asked my son what he wanted for Christmas, He said a baby sister, I told him that was a tall order for Jesus and he would have to pray about wanting a baby sister.

His reply's to me, “MOM! Santa's house is named is CHASK, isn't it? I am just going to tell Santa to go to CHASK and pick us up a baby sister, and if he don't find one there, I will tell him to wait until after Christmas and go to Walmart. There will be one on clearance!”

Children's thinking is so innocent Michelle.

More than a Doll....

By Tom and Sherry Bushnell



This summer, Michelle asked if we would be interested in having one of her life-like dolls for CHASK or A Blessed Beginning for the purposes of helping women experience what a newborn would feel and look like. Granted nothing can replace the real wiggle and warmth of a human baby, but these certainly come a close second... as you will see.

When our doll arrived in the mail a few months later, I opened the box and sucked in a deep breath.... I was shocked at how real it looked. Everyone in the NATHHAN / CHASK office was completely taken aback. Suddenly, the imp in me had a hilarious idea. As a midwife, I had just been to a long string of births. It was my first morning home in a

few days. Tom at work at Wilson Law firm in town and had invited me to lunch (He missed me!)

I carefully wrapped the baby up in its hand-made, light mint-green, crocheted blanket snugly. Arriving at his office and practicing my “motherly pose”, cradled the “baby” in my arms very lovingly. I walked into the office and all the ladies were suddenly on “super-alert”.. You know that “whaaaaat do you have in therrrrre?” expression. I walked over to Tom’s desk and said in all seriousness... “Honey, one of the moms I delivered was not able to keep her baby, and she decided she would like me to have her....” Tom’s eyes got a big as saucers. Then he produced the biggggggest smile. “Really....?”

I nodded, feeling slightly guilty at this point for my deception, as he was obviously thrilled.



Our doll, Hope Blessing and Tom

I gently handed him the baby. He looked sweetly down, bent his head closer, then closer and looked up at me quizzically.... “Is this real!?!...This is a doll!”

My mischievous grin turned into laughter at his confused the.... Oh.... You got me!” look on his face.

I must say that I un-nerved him for several hours. The ladies in the office were incredulous at the life-like look and were equally stunned.



Here is a letter from Michelle.

I thought you might like to know how a doll like this is made and see if you can think of any uses for a realistic doll that can totally pass as a live baby.... For a minute or two....

My name is Michelle,

I have been making dolls for 13 years. This became my passion, as I love children. I feel my love for children comes out in my dolls. Here is how they are made by me.

Making a Life-Like doll

To make a life-like doll, first someone has to sculpt one out of clay. After sanding and finishing the sculpt, the doll is sent to a factory in China to produce molds. These will be used to make the molds for making a vinyl doll "kit". The kit includes just the head, limbs. There is no color in this kit. They are just blank.

As an artist, I have to create the colors to make this doll appear life like. The coloring I use is a special paint that has to be mixed to a very watery consistency. I paint the colors on the doll layer by layer, very thin layers. This can take a month to complete. Each layer has to be heat set. After I have gotten the color the skin hue and color I have aimed for, I have to be sure that the head and limbs are just as I want them. Do I need to add something? Once I am absolutely sure the paint is how I like, and it looks realistic to me, then I go on to the details such as shading, which there are special brushes needed. Once I have

completed the shading and it is heat set (this is very important) then I can go on to the eye brows. I use a very fine

paint brush to feather on the eye brows. Once they are perfect, and they are how I want them, then I will go on to the toe and finger nails. I mix up the colors that I want to use for the nails, paint then very carefully and then heat set them. I use the nail color to paint the white tips on the nails to make them appear to be realistic as possible.

Once I have all the fine details done, then the baby is ready to have the eyes placed. I buy the best eyes on the market. The cheaper eyes change color, or fade as there is nothing to protect them from the sun.

After the eyes have been placed, then I gather the supplies for the baby's hair. The hair is called "mo-hair" and it comes from an Angora goat. The hair is cut, then cleaned, then dyed with special dye. This is a quite a process to get the hair cleaned and right. I use what is called a rooting needle or "felting needle". These are very sharp! Trust me! I have had this meet my finger many times and it hurts! I have to be very careful. There is a technique to rooting so the hair so it will lay flat and look realistic. The rooting can take very well up to months to complete. After I have rooted the head, then I glue the inside of the head so the hair will not pull out....else the baby will be bald over time.

Letting the head set aside to dry, I then go on to the body. I make my own and custom fit the body to the doll. I make the body very soft. Once I have my body made, I put it together with bear joints. This allows the doll to move its limbs



easily. After this is completed. I go back to the head now that the glue is dry. If I want my baby to

have a pacifier, then I cut the nipple off and glue the magnet to the paci and into the inside of the head. Once dry, I take the filling for completing my doll and put it in the head and limbs, body, putting the baby together. I then dress it.... And there you have your doll finished! It can take me anywhere from about 4 weeks to 3 months.

There are many other methods to make these dolls and this is just one example of how they are made. I created "Hope" for CHASK. I wanted them to use her as they needed. Hope took about 3 months to complete. I create dolls for mother's who cannot have children. For those who have lost a child, or someone who would like a doll to look like their grown child, in baby form. This art is very rewarding. I also have donated dolls to our church to help with Christmas funds, food drive raffle, reconstruction of a new addition to our church. God has given me a talent and it is one I like to share.

I presently have one on e-bay. My e-bay seller's name monkeykrust. As of the new year I will only be making special orders.

agracefulhand@aol.com



Our precious baby girl has passed away... Selah Green

I just wanted to let you know that our Selah (birth name Mary Traore/in Michigan) passed away on Sunday morning. God worked miracles through her short 55 days on earth - but the biggest was that her birth mom converted from Muslim to Christianity! What was also amazing was that her adoption was finalized (another miracle) just 5 days before she went to heaven. God is good.

Just thought I'd share that with you ... thanks for the opportunity to love an angel :)

I've included a family picture for you.

Many blessings,

Kim Green

(Michigan)

Benjamin (10), Parker (9), Kya (9), Caleb (9), McKenna (7), Eli (7), Madisyn (5), Klaire (5), Liam (3), Isaiah (2) and Selah (newborn) We are blessed over and over from Korea, Liberia, China, and the United States.

2 Cor 5:13-14a (NLT)

"If it seems that we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us"



Birth mom chooses to go home...

Dear Sherry,

I just wanted to update you on Anna's situation. She has gone back home, her family purchased her a bus ticket and she left last Thursday morning. She did get into see the mental health professionals before she left and they set her up with an appointment for therapy in Texas. She said she was diagnosed with bi-polar, PTSD, and manic-depressive disorder (which I think is the same thing as bi polar?) Top that off with long term drug use, and then an unwanted pregnancy...of course she is confused and scared.

She stated that her parents wanted her to sign guardianship over to them of the baby so they can draw the benefits. I was a little surprised that it was stated just like that, but I guess she is from a different place. She has been talking to a cousin that is a Christian, I am hoping they can give her real help and guidance. She told me that her mom told her that she herself had five children before she ever got married, and had four more, and that adoption is not an option. She feels that Anna has made the mistake and she has to care for the baby like her mother did. They made her feel horribly guilty for wanting to place her baby for adoption. She told me that she may just be "stuck" with this baby. I am praying that love can grow in her heart for this little baby boy and that he will come into this world and be accepted with all the love that God has for him.

I am also asking for prayer for myself. I have to admit, I wanted to say bad things to her about her decisions, her lies, and the way she treated her children and mine, but God would not allow anything but kind words and encouragement come from my mouth. She really sent our family for a ride, and it's a little hard to understand why she even came here. I am guessing some times you have to go far from a situation to be able to see it up close. I am praying that I will be able to help people like her in the future, and not let this stop

me from doing what God tells me to do.

I did get up out of bed to write this because I get on the site on my phone every night and pray for the children, babies, families that are posted. I saw the woman in Texas whose story seems all too familiar. God told me to get up and let you know that we would be willing to help if she does not find what she is looking for in the states she is looking for it in. We can only offer what God offers, and she must know that we are not financially wealthy by any stretch of the imagination. (Anna told our foster son that we were not living up to our promises and were not getting her what she wanted fast enough....we made no promises for any material thing, only the promise of God's love for her and her children.) Our church, however, supported Anna in full and has collected things to furnish an apartment.

So, those things are still available for another women in need, and the church is still willing to help where they can. If this lady would just like someone to talk to, I am willing to lend an ear and offer as much Godly encouragement as I can. We could possibly offer a small apartment if she is fully committed to making the journey to Missouri. Please relay this information to her and if she is interested in speaking to me she can call anytime. Please let me know her name and any other needed information if she chooses to call us.

In His Name,
CHASK family

P.S...Please keep Anna in your prayers, she said she would let me know when she arrived home safely. She texted me from the bus once, but I have not heard from her since then.

Hello,

First, I want to commend you on your wonderful web site and the resources you provide to families of special kids.

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*comprehension



Looking for health resources that address common childhood health problems from a natural perspective? Click on Health in the far left side bar.

Two new titles!

The ADD & ADHD Diet

Kid's First: Health Without Interference

<http://www.squareonepublishers.com>

Managing My Money **Banking and Budgeting Basics**

By Natalie hale

www.woodbinehouse.com

If you think a gift from God only looks one way, you will miss the actual gift God sends you...

Our family celebrated Anna and her birthday in May. I wrote the following and thought you might enjoy it too.

Today I am crossing the Tacoma Narrows bridge, a place that spans the shortest spot in the Puget Sound in this area. (It is a high bridge that you can see water from all directions and it is narrow to drive!)

I look down to what used to be a friend's house on the beach, where our little trailer used to sit, as we built our home on the hill above.

I am lost, lost in thought and mental flashbacks. As I cross the bridge, I flash back to nine weeks earlier when I went in for an ultrasound with my pregnancy. Everything was normal, so very normal. I did not even have a clue things were not normal when the Dr. stopped by my house on her way home. Then she explained the critical nature of my unborn daughter's heart and the words "fix it" were not even used. Nothing would be normal again.

As they wheeled me into the delivery room, I was keenly aware of how quiet and crowded it was. Not at all the festive occasion of my last c-section. I had no idea that so many doctors, nurses and pieces of equipment could even fit into such a small space. I was all hooked up and ready to welcome my little girl into my arms but I knew that was not where they would place her, even for a minute. Tears and fears controlled the moment.

It did not take long before she entered the world and there was nothing on the outside to suggest the grave state of her heart on the inside. She was soooo cute. With a few words and quick motions, she left my sight for the intensive care nursery and a life-saving proce-

dure in the next few hours. Little did I realize that this was only the beginning, the beginning of many, many visits to the hospital and many procedures.

God is merciful... even by just not allowing us to see anymore than the present. And for this very present, I was the mother of a wonderful new little person. She was only 4 lbs, 15 ozs and 19 inches long. She was a gift from God that I loved.

Stories abound about people who discard a material gift that they think is worthless, only realizing too late that they have thrown away an antique of great value. Some see a less than normal baby as worthless too. But for me, after 19 years have come and gone since I crossed that bridge, that fateful day, Anna has never ceased being a gift. She cannot talk, walk or eat. She requires a lot of care every day. She has lived through 2 strokes, open heart surgery, gastro surgery, cerebral palsy, no spleen and a host of other things.

But when she smiles from ear to ear when she sees Daddy come in the door from work, when she enjoys rides in the car and is a happy person most days, I enjoy her just the way she is.

God taught me a lesson that I remember every day of my life...

If you think a gift from God only looks one way, you will miss the actual gift God sends you. God sent me Anna. Normal is highly over rated.

By Valerie Engleman



Can Do Street

Hi, I'm Jean Campbell, creator of "Can Do" Street. Welcome to the "Can Do" Blog for Parents and Teachers. "Can Do" Street is about helping young children

make good choices so they are safe and behave in ways that are socially acceptable at home, in school and in community settings. This blog is about sharing how you as a parent or a teacher instill these values and life skills.

www.candostreet.com

If you are a teacher, please share a curriculum or lesson plan that works for you on our page, "Teacher's Stories." If you are a parent, please share how you are successful in guiding your child in good decision-making on our, "Parent's Share," page. If you are a grandparent, we have a special place just for you to share, "Grandparents Corner" Don't forget to send your favorite recipe, which will appear on the "Kid Friendly" page of this blog. You can send your submissions to me at jeanc@candostreet.com. Suggestions or questions, please call me at 646-269-5818.

New children's book

"The Bravest Boy I Ever Knew"

I have recently published a children's book called "The Bravest Boy I Ever Knew" with Tate Publishing. This is a book about a boy named Michael who tells about his best friend who is disabled/handicapped. After teaching preschool for 17 years and reading hundreds of books, I never came across a book about "normal" kids and handicapped kids being friends. I want children to know that handicapped children are so much like "normal" children. I wrote this book about a cousin of mine who grew up with Familial Dysautonomia. You can find my book on amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, borders.com, as well as through Tate Publishing. Lisa Eichlin

I Cut You Out!

A silhouette is the simplest way to capture the essence of a person's personality. A classic silhouette is a rapid hand-cut profile portrait, sculptured in black. An uncanny likeness and lifelike quality bring you only the finest in keepsakes.

For wiggly, can't sit still children, this might be a good solution to capturing the essence of their childhood.

Silhouette cutting



Large families seldom get to do something special like this!

This man cuts, FREE HAND, your child's silhouette! He can do it from a photo! And DO have one of you and your spouse, if you have one, done together. They are a treasure.

He graciously gave us a discount, and permission for me to pass this on to other large families.

Please tell your families that I will give them for families/related: \$ 11 Each for a family of 8 or more, \$12 each for a family of 6-7, \$13 each for a family of 4-5. Tell them Monique sent you for the discount!

ADD \$5 FOR SHIPPING

<http://silhouettesinasnap.com/>

Snowflake Embryos looking for a mommy...

(Editor's note: Warren and Anne are a brave couple, taking a special step for the embryos that they cannot have implanted. They believe in life, and are sharing their strong believe that all life is precious. Their hearts are with us here at CHASK, praying for special homes for their embryos.)

From Snowflakes: In the past, we contacted CHASK about a couple of families who had embryos that we needed to find special homes for. You helped us by including an article in the CHASK newsletter about these embryos and their families. I am very happy to tell you that both sets of embryos were adopted and both families achieved pregnancies! The first family's baby just celebrated her first birthday and she continues to bring endless amounts of joy to their home. The second family is currently pregnant and could not be happier.

Now we have another special family whose embryos are in need of a home. The issue of concern is that the genetic father had a reactive test for Hepatitis B. The story about these embryos is below. Of course, any family who comes to us through CHASK would not be obligated to pay adoption service fees.

Here is their story...

In November 2006, an anonymous egg donor went through an egg retrieval cycle and gave her eggs to a loving African-American/Caucasian couple, Warren and Anna (names have been changed). Married for 12 years, they were excited at the possibility of finally becoming pregnant. The donated eggs were

fertilized with Warren's sperm and 11 embryos were created. Three embryos, precious lives created with the hope of children for Warren and Anna, were transferred into Anna's womb and the other eight were frozen.

After two weeks of prayerful, emotional waiting, Anna was overjoyed to learn she was pregnant with twins! Several months later, their son and daughter were born, beautiful and healthy! With newborn twins and the possibility of eight more children, Warren and Anna decided they needed to find an adoptive family to love and give life to their remaining embryos.

Picture of 1/2 African / American 1/2 caucasian twins...?

Warren and Anna wrote, "It is our hope than an interested family will adopt our embryos and make them a happy part of their family and show them the value of family and love children deserve. It is also our hope that such family have the joy and happiness we have had with the blessing of children, as a result of deciding to adopt these precious beings.

It was not our intent to have embryos left over. However, at the beginning of the procedure there were 11 healthy embryos; we used three; there was a pregnancy and later healthy twins were delivered.

"We are a bi-racial couple. We began dating four years after we met and were married four years later. We are Roman Catholic and attend church regularly. We like to travel, exercise, go to the beach, walk and golf. Warren has a Master's degree and I did complete some college. We live in a quiet, culturally diverse neighborhood with young children. We would like to be kept informed as to the adoption status and family placement of the embryos. While it is not our desire to interfere in personal matters, we would be desirous to have contact and possible visits with the adoptive family."

These embryos are waiting for their special parents who know in their hearts they are meant to adopt them. The parents need to know that Warren's blood test showed "reactive" test results for Hepatitis B Core Antibody and CMV (cytomegalovirus). For more information about these test results and/or viruses, please consult your doctor.

More information about the embryos:

Race—African American (sperm provider) and Caucasian (egg donor)

Age of egg donor—30

Number of embryos frozen—eight

Date of cryopreservation—November 2006

Stage of embryos frozen—Day 3

Number of cells of each embryo—Vial 1 (8c) (7c) (7c), Vial 2 (7c) (4c), Vial 3 (3c) (2c) (1c) Warren and Anna asked the embryologist to freeze all the embryos because they valued each embryo as a life. The doctor or embryologist did not necessarily agree with their decision but obliged. Snowflakes understands that from a medical perspective, some of these embryos may not look as developed as they should by day three. Snowflakes believes that each fertilized egg is a life which deserves its chance to live, however short or long that life might be.

Travel Considerations: Due to the "reactive" Hepatitis B result, a fertility doctor may not be willing to accept these embryos. We have located a clinic in Tennessee who would be willing to accept them. The adoptive parents may need to travel to Tennessee for the frozen embryo transfer.

If you might be the parent(s) these embryos are

Picture of babies

waiting for, please complete a preliminary application and email it to Megan Fabian, the Snowflakes Program Coordinator at megan@nightlight.org. (Please note somewhere that you are specifically interested in the embryos from Warren & Anna.) You will be contacted and may be asked to submit a completed homestudy, an autobiographical profile, and a letter from your doctor confirming your ability to carry a baby. Warren and Anna are interested in seeing your autobiographical profile so they can feel comfortable with the family who will love and care for these precious embryos. You may also be able to review Warren and Anna's autobiographical profile, pictures, and medical health history before adopting the embryos.

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40

Megan

Office hours: Monday thru Thursday 8:00-5:00 and Saturdays. Please dial my extension, 115, if you reach our voicemail.

Megan Fabian
Snowflakes Program Coordinator
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Joey

I would like to tell you about our son Joey. We adopted him at age 9 in 1998. He had CLS, a rare genetic disorder that results in short stature, MRDD, distinctive facial, chest, and hand features, and often drop seizures. Our Joey had all the above but the drop seizures. He also had a contagious smile! He never did learn to talk but he could walk into a room full of strangers and be a friend to each one by the time he left.

Scoliosis is also often found in CLS kids and Joey definitely had spinal problems. When he was 11 he had a spinal fusion. It was initially successful but as the years passed his spine continued to curve. Our options for further surgery were limited and we chose not to pursue them because any further surgery would result in him not being able to walk. As the curve progressed he became less mobile, we had to take him in a wheelchair if we were going to have to walk far. He was still able to walk around the house and this was very important to him.

Joey started having trouble aspirating. After a lot of testing it was discovered he had reflux. He was put on medication but it wasn't helpful. The condition of his esophagus was getting bad. It was only a matter of time until he developed esophageal cancer. Surgery, called a Nisson procedure was recommended. In most people it is a relatively minor procedure done by laser. Because of Joey's malformations the surgeon had to

open him up, it was a 3 hour surgery. He came through the surgery wonderfully. The surgeon was very relieved and we were thankful.

Four days after the surgery we were looking at discharge from the hospital soon. My husband, Ed was staying with him so I could be at home with our other 11 children. I visited in the morning, fed him lunch, and left him looking through a catalog, one of his favorite things to do.

Throughout the afternoon my husband kept me updated, Joey was having problems. Everything was explained away and no one was overly concerned although they were monitoring him closely. At about 9:00 that evening, Ed called and told me to head to Akron, a 45 minute drive, and meet them in ICU. I called our pastor's wife and she called my cell phone and prayed me most of the way.

When I got there I discovered that Joey had coded on the floor. They put him on a ventilator to give us time to say goodbye. When our pastor and his wife heard this they were on the road to Akron also.

It was a very difficult time but a very special one. We prayed and sang and at about 1:00 AM they turned the ventilator off and our Joey went to see Jesus face to face.

I was amazed at the funeral at how many people came not just to support us but because this very special young man had touched their hearts. Our pastor got a laugh when he referred to the "bulletin thing". Joey loved paper and at church he would go up to people and offer them his bulletin. They could look at it a couple minutes but then they were expected to give it back.

As painful as losing Joey has been the love and joy we received from him far outweighed the pain. God did not have him grow in my body but he most definitely is in my heart.

Martha Fortune
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The Goulding Family shares about their experience adopting a baby with Down syndrome.

We also wanted to give you an update on our lives. Last Fall, we adopted a little baby who has Down Syndrome with the help of Robin Steele with the Down Syndrome association of Cincinnati. This little baby boy has been an incredible blessing to our family and we are grateful that we continue to have much contact with his birth family. We pray that they will someday come to know Jesus in a personal way. Our hearts are open to this family that wouldn't have been possible had it not been for your family and the way that you encourage us to be willing to adopt but to also be willing to serve and love birth families. Our son is named Neko James named by his mother and father. His birth mom made a video compilation in hopes that it would rescue other babies who are diagnosed with Down Syndrome. She is not a Christian but she is very pro-life. She chose to have her baby in spite of the possible diagnosis. I am sending the link to the video that she made in hopes that it might encourage you and perhaps can be used in some way. She gave full permission for it to be used.

Look on U Tube for Neko's Journey.m4v

Thank you again for your continued fight for life!!!

The Goulding Family



www.stutteringhelp.org

To help parents gain a better understanding of stuttering, the Stuttering Foundation offers free streaming video of Stuttering and Your Child: Help for Parents at

www.stutteringhelp.org.

The site also offers a worldwide referral list of specialists in stuttering.

Tips for talking with a child who stutters:

1. Don't tell the child to slow down or "relax" but instead make an effort to slow down your own speech.
2. Speak with the child in an unhurried way, pausing frequently. Wait a few seconds after the child finishes speaking before you begin to speak. This slows down the overall pace of conversation.
3. Use your facial expressions, eye contact and other body language to convey to the child that you are listening to the content of their message and not how she or he is talking.
4. Don't complete words for the child or talk for him or her.
5. Don't make stuttering something to be ashamed of. Talk about stuttering just like any other matter.

**Call their help line:
800-992-9392**

info@stutteringhelp.org

Record Keeping

Have a whole lot to do, and way too much paperwork to keep track of?

By Sherry Bushnell

Clip art of mom being buried by paperwork.

How about records, letters and forms tucked in a drawer for safe keeping?

It seems like every specialist we see has questions about past medical, school, progress or past therapy plans.

Keeping records of progress and activities on each of our children reduces stress and is a lifesaver when we need to find something in a hurry.

It is especially important to document important events in the life of a child with disabilities.

With a good record system, you can answer detailed questions with accuracy and a minimum of effort on your part.

As our children get older, our memory fades unless we have detailed each milestone and

carefully documented progress, we might miss a important detail that would help in therapy, education or even answering with pertinent details helpful in deciding future medical care.

In order to make the record keeping process as easy as possible, let's divide our files into four areas:

1. Medical Records: This refers to both the child with the disability and the rest of the family

2. School Records: School records start at the beginning, as early as infant stimulation done and goes on through the high school years.

3. Personal / Social: Camps, special awards, pictures, child's interests. Community service can include the different areas in the community your child is involved in such as AWANAs, swimming classes, children's choir, and church activities.

4. Legal and Other Resources: Financial, legal, passport, or any other important papers such as adoption paper work.

Medical Records:

If you choose to participate in your local school district programs or other government programs, you will need a birth certificate and current immunization record.

It is good to keep in the medical file detailed developmental history from pregnancy through current time. This should include doctor's and hospital reports, medical specialist consulted and their reports. Any surgeries, occupational therapy and dental records should be kept.

A list of medications being given to your child at home and away from home. We

suggest keeping a current list on a laminated card attached to your child's backpack or in his or her bag.

If your child is non-verbal and/or being given medication by people you may not know, keep a list of allergies, and medication, dosage and times.

Keep a running list of all prescription medications given and any adverse reactions. Then when you need it, the information can be easily retrieved... such as when you are heading to a doctor you have not seen before!

A written list is a time-saver and a real help for the nurse who has to take a history and give the doctor a condensed version of your child's medical history.

Keep a copy of your Medicaid or Medicare status and any reference letters.

Any medical insurance cards and numbers and coverage in the past.

School Records:

Keep a separate file for each school year. Keep in each file a copy of your journal notes on progress, any milestones noted, a sample of work at the beginning of the year and then at the end.

The purpose is to show progress, not that your child is "on grade level" with his or her peers. Some children will not be even close to grade level and the proof of progress will be encouragement to you and to anyone who might be interested.

Keep any testing records and who administered them.

If you have your child tested by a psychologist, keep a copy of their diagnosis and any suggestions or findings in this file.

The name and address of any school, program, or teacher that will share previous records.

Any previous IEP (Individual Education Plans) or report cards, verbal reports (you can write them down, who said it and date it.)

It is amazing after just 2 years how much information we forget!

Side note: You have a right to have copies of any information written about your child, by anyone. Everything reported about your child is legally available to

the parents or primary care givers of that child.

There may be a fee for copying, but if you need to see what is being written about your child, request to see a copy in writing. Usually there is no problem with obtaining paperwork.

In some cases, you may be required to sign a form before an assessment is done, or test given. Note the technical name of the test and request an actual copy of the results.

If you have a child that is pretty severely involved, you may need to divide this file into several areas such as:

- Language / Speech
- Math
- Self-Help
- Vocational
- Therapies

Personal / Social Records:

This is my favorite file! In it contains copies of child's interests over the year. Samples of pictures that I especially liked or artwork that fits.

Any clubs or organization that we belong to and any awards or books completed. This is

good for Bible book clubs like AWANA's, community clubs like girl scouts or theater or choir groups. Copies of programs, pictures of that activity, and other mementos are good memory keeping ideas.

Another fun area of this file is family history. When we have a child that will need help remembering things later, keep simple scrap book pages that help trigger high lights like "trip to the theme park in the summer" "Camping with Grandma" "Our trip to the ocean". These are good speech / communication tips as well.

If you child has a past that has not included your family, then keeping anything that will help you in the future help piece together information will be good kept in an envelope. This might be more important later, should questions arise or information need to be obtained. It should be included as a part of your child's personal record.

Legal and Other Paperwork

Many government agencies and programs require proof of:

- Address
- Birth Certificate
- Income
- Social Security number
- Proof of Citizenship papers
- Medicaid or Medicare letters

If your child has any legal paperwork associated with them, you will need to have a special file for each entity.

- Adoption paperwork
- Custody
- Legal Guardianship
- Permanent Guardianship after age 18

Having paperwork ready and easily grabbed makes our life easy and helps us stay organized. It doesn't take much to file things and can be relegated to a mature teen.

Teaching organization and the importance of keeping track of the details in our life can help our children become better able to manage self-care later.

If they can see that mom has a special place for important things, then they will be inclined to find a special place for the things that are important to them.

The idea of check lists

What can be more frustrating than forgetting an important detail that is obvious. Most times it is the ordinary things we forget, not the big details.

Keeping a check list in our purse of our routine can help us stay focused and on track if we loose our brains on a foggy day. Ever have those days....? The problem is remembering to look.

Check lists of:

- Grocery items we normally buy
- Weekly appointments
- A daily schedule
- What to eat (or not to eat!)
- Suggestions for dinner
- Items that we don't want to forget on our errand.
- School goals
- Questions to ask someone

Keep a post-it pad or small notebook in your purse and use it. This keeps those ideas in our head within reach later on, when hundreds of other ideas crowd them out.

Keeping a file and check lists are great ways to stay organized and relaxed. Try it this next year.

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Grandpa and Grandma's Page



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By Deborah Mary Kathleen Mills



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