

Hi and Congratulations!!!!

All of us in these stories have been where you are right now. I can't speak for the others, but my husband and I were scared, confused and curious. I kept telling people, "I'll be okay when I can get to where THIS is normal for my family." I needed to get over the shock of what had just happened so I could figure out what to do next.

Well, I'm over the shock. And let me assure you, we are as normal as any other family. Joseph is now four years old, attends Elba Elementary School in an effort to prepare him for kindergarten next year. He loves things other four year olds love—Scooby Doo, Doodlebops, playing outdoors, dogs and cats, books and puzzles. He is trying to potty train and speaks primarily in sign language but is starting to say some words. He laughs a lot, plays very predictable tricks on us, and aggravates his 6 year old sister, Grace. He knows most of his alphabet and numbers 1-10.

I tell you all this so you will know that even when things seem bleak, there is hope. Right now, the Down syndrome community is experiencing great hope. Life expectancy is LEAPING every year. Communities are exhibiting great caring and appreciation for people with special needs—just look at our Buddy Walk! People with Down syndrome are going to work and contributing to their communities more and more each year. Right now, Joseph is an accepted member of Elba and I am sure that won't change as he gets older because our culture is learning to appreciate people who society called "different" just a few years ago.

There are so many good things that we would have missed out on had Joseph not come into our lives. I can't imagine life without him or life with a Joseph who didn't have that extra chromosome! I don't want you to think he's perfect, but he possesses a love of people that I've been trying to learn for years. He never misses an opportunity to wave, smile and blow a kiss. He is silly and smart. He loves to get a haircut and he would trade his favorite toy for a piece of cheese.

When the time is right, I would love for you to meet him and I'd love to meet you too. Joseph is the world's best advocate for Down syndrome. Spend some time with him and you will come away encouraged. You can't be in his presence and not smile. He won't let you.

I'm standing in the gap for you right now. Great things await you. If you are in the throws of medical problems, my prayers are with you. Talking with other parents may help. Call any time day or night.

Anne Cline

(334)897-1550 Home

(334)897-2257 Work

(334)464-8347 Cell

PS When I was a new parent, there was one piece of trivial information that made me smile and I want to share it with you...Now that you have welcomed this beautiful bundle of joy into your life, you will never have to wait in line at Disney World. Your sweet baby is an honored guest in the Magic Kingdom! Check it out!

