

Dear FRIEND,

In 2001, within three weeks of each other, we both gave birth to babies with Down syndrome. We had known each other for a few months (we met during our pregnancies) so it was great that we had each other for support, right from the beginning. We were in awe of the way God brought us together. Headland is a small town. Neither of us had previously known anyone with Down syndrome and we lived just 5 minutes apart. It was very early on that we felt that while our friendship was meant as a gift TO us, God expected something FROM us.

When our babies were almost one year old, we had the opportunity to attend a national conference of NDSS (National Down Syndrome Society). What an amazing and eye opening experience. It was so exciting to see so many families who had loved ones with Down syndrome all in one place. So many of the people we met there had local Down syndrome parent groups in their town or nearby. We both left there with the spark of desire (a nudge from the Lord :) to see that happen in our area.

One of the reasons we so desired to have a local group was that our experience thus far was hit and miss as to how we met other families who had children with Down syndrome. We had been introduced to a couple of families further down the road in their Down syndrome journeys and it was so helpful to see their families doing well and to know we could go to them with our questions. We wanted to be a part of a local Down syndrome community that supported each other and that helped others have a positive understanding of Down syndrome. One of our strongest desires has always been for no parent in our area to give birth without quickly knowing there is someone they can call. Someone they can call who knows their fears and who will be there for them. Someone who knows not only their fears, but the special joys that parenting a child with Down syndrome brings.

We can hardly believe how “our baby, FRIENDS” has grown up, yet we can see God’s hand in the growth every step of the way. With busy families of our own, it has been challenging to manage the time commitment FRIENDS has required. It has been amazing to see how God has brought others aboard to help FRIENDS better serve our community, usually at just the right time. While FRIENDS is not a religious organization, our reason for being committed to the vision of FRIENDS is based on religious convictions. For both of us, it is something we absolutely feel called to do. God has blessed our efforts in ways we could never have imagined and we are so grateful.

We recently celebrated our 5th Annual Buddy Walk. When FRIENDS began, our goal was to support each other emotionally, provide educational resources to families, and to educate the community as to the positive impact people with Down syndrome can contribute to our society. With the financial success of Buddy Walk, our vision for FRIENDS and its purpose in families’ lives is growing too. We are so excited about the new things on the horizon and the future of FRIENDS! We invite you to come along as we continue to explore together this wonderful adventure of living life with Down syndrome.

Your FRIENDS,

Heather Adkins and Josette Hall