

Heaven Sent

Julia was born on July 27, 1999. The diagnosis of Down syndrome came the day I gave birth to her. We had no idea what it was but we knew our daughter was very sick. She spent the week in ICU due to related heart defects. The genetic testing performed at the hospital confirmed Julia had Trisomy 21. All I can remember was hearing bits and pieces of sentences that the doctors and staff were saying: mental retardation, early intervention, heart defects, etc. She looked so perfect, nothing looked wrong with her. I was expecting to take a healthy baby home from the hospital never imagining anything else. I was in shock, it didn't seem real. I remember being so scared, I had never been this scared before. She was so beautiful, I kept telling myself the diagnosis was a mistake.

I fell more in love with her every day. I was determined to do everything I could to help her. I bought books on Down syndrome, enrolled her in early intervention services provided by the county and said to myself, "if my daughter is going to have Down syndrome, then I am going to do everything in my power to make her the best she can be." One day my sister called me and said she was talking to a woman at the park and started talking about Julia. The woman told her of a place called Stepping Stones. She immediately called me and told me to call and get more information about this place that the woman was raving about. I didn't waste any time, I called and set up a visit. Julia was only a month old. Little did I know that walking through those doors would be the best thing I would ever do for Julia. I went in with hopes that Stepping Stones would help Julia reach her potential, never imagining what it would do for me. Not only did Julia greatly benefit from the various therapies, but I learned so much from the experienced and caring staff that helped me become an advocate for my daughter. Stepping Stones nurtures the child and the families by providing educational and emotional support at a time that is very vulnerable for families who are dealing with so much uncertainty regarding their child's needs, growth and development, etc.

Julia is now 9 years old and attending the public school in our town where she is in a self contained class and mainstreamed for some classes. I believe that Stepping Stones was instrumental in Julia's growth and accomplishments. I thank God for pointing us down that path and enriching our lives. Children with Down syndrome are a gift and great teachers of lessons no books can ever teach you. Stepping Stones is just as much a gift.