



October 1st 2016

Happy October! This is the 21st year that October has had a special meaning to me. My oldest son, Flynn, was born on July 1st 1995. When he was born we were told by the doctor that he had some characteristics of Down syndrome. Of course this was after we had both held him and already fallen in love. I remember distinctly holding him for the first time and getting that feeling – which I hope all parents do – of the overwhelming instinct to do anything and everything I could for him. So when the doctor said we should do some tests, it didn't matter to us. There were some tears. There were concerns. There were lots of questions. But we had a son that we loved and that was awesome.

So since October is Down syndrome awareness month, I take the time to share some information about Down syndrome and Flynn each year. I now share the information in lots of ways. I really hope you will share this information too.

Down syndrome is caused by an extra chromosome. Flynn has 47 instead of 46. The extra chromosome causes up to about 10 characteristics in people with Down syndrome. These characteristics vary in people with Down syndrome. They include things like having a large gap between their big toe and second toe, having a crease across the entire palm of their hand, having only one crease instead of two on their pinky finger, low muscle tone, and developmental cognitive delays. Flynn also has difficulty speaking clearly. It is not that he does not have much to say. There are times when he works so hard to communicate with us. Sometimes it is at dinner and we have to ask him to eat. So he does have lots of thoughts and dreams and plans. For some reason he started saying that when he turned 100 years old he was not going to have Down syndrome anymore. It kind of broke my heart, but it is also very sweet and innocent. The other milestone he has been planning for is his 22nd birthday. (His 21st was marked by eating dinner in a bar and writing his name on a dollar bill that was then taped to the ceiling.) Since he was about 10 we knew he would be in our local school until he was 22. We told him he could get a dog when he was 22. He has been very focused on his 22nd birthday. So next summer he will get a dog. He is very excited when we talk about it.

One of the best things I have read about Down syndrome is in the link below. It is titled "If People with Down Syndrome Ruled the World." I hope you will read it.

<http://www.nads.org/if-people-with-down-syndrome-ruled-the-world/>

Flynn has had a good year. He had a beard and looked very manly. He is now clean shaven and still looks manly. He continues to ride at Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Stables and participates in Equestrian Special Olympics. He also competed in the Special Olympics for Track and Field this year and added Power Lifting. He has a great friend in his class that also has Down syndrome. They have lots of fun together including going to weekly get-togethers at Gigi's Playhouse. Flynn and I also went to Six Flags nearly every week of the summer.

Thanks for reading. Thanks for sharing. Thank you for being aware of people with Down syndrome.