

2011

Dear friends, colleagues, acquaintances, family, and anyone else that may be reading this. I have been sending out an e-mail on October 1st for about the last 10 years now. 16 years and 3 months ago Beth gave birth to our first son who is named Flynn David Marshall. (We discovered “Flynn” meant “Son of the Red Haired Man”, and we got a twofer with his middle name since both of his grandfathers were named David!) Shortly after he was born the OB came back in to the recovery room and informed us that Flynn had signs of a baby with Down Syndrome. The diagnosis was confirmed in the first week of Flynn’s life and our life was changed forever, as any couples life is changed after the birth of their first child. I can happily report that for the last 16 years and 3 months that our life was changed undoubtedly for the better.

October is Down Syndrome Awareness month and whether you are reading this on my new Facebook page or in an e-mail I hope you will take the time to reflect on people that have cognitive disabilities and appreciate the lessons they have for all of us.

Tonight, (I usually get this out on the morning of October 1st, but I have taken full advantage of the fact that October starts on a Saturday this year!) Flynn is at his second Homecoming Dance at Richmond Burton High School and this is the second year that he was elected to the homecoming court by his peers, and this is the second time he has gone out to dinner with a group of friends independently. Flynn has enriched our lives beyond measure and I believe he has brought out the best of the people around him. He has friends at the High School that would be the envy of any student in high school. Beth is told by students all the time that they love saying Hi to Flynn and that Flynn always brightens their day. The star football players, the cheerleaders, the girls, the new students, the bold students, the shy students; Flynn seemingly knows them all! I am constantly amazed by the people that say Hi to Flynn when we are out in public. Not bad for a person with typical developmental delays for people with Down Syndrome and with a very limited ability to speak clearly.

Flynn was diagnosed with 7 or 8 characteristics of babies with Down Syndrome before the Karyotype confirmed that he had a 3rd 21st chromosome. Down Syndrome is also called Trisomy 21. The most challenging aspect of Flynn’s condition is his difficulty with speech. We don’t know if it is related to his cognition or his low muscle tone or a combination of factors, but his ability to communicate with words is a struggle. He has a communication device called a Tango, which he is using more and more, but understanding what he says is an area of constant improvement.

I have said many times before that Flynn lets us enjoy life to the fullest. He moves at his own pace and in a world where we say kids are growing up too fast, Flynn allows us to enjoy every tiny step of improvement as he grows and develops into a young man.

If this is the first time you have received this note please feel free to pass it on. A link to my school web page where I have posted past notes is located [here](#). For my new Facebook friends this may be news to you and I hope you will take the time to view the links in the previous notes about Down Syndrome.

For you veterans out there I hope you were not too disappointed that I waited until tonight to get this posted, and if you would like some updates on Flynn's Activities here it goes...

Flynn is still riding horses at Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Stables, and is now riding drill team patterns with multi-step routines. He is running the RB flag up and down the sidelines at the High School Football games. He adored the Pop Fusion singers at Great America this summer and Raging Bull is still his favorite ride although I think the Orbit is a close second. He won his first Gold Medal at the State Games for the Special Olympics this summer in the 100 m dash. He attended a week of overnight Summer Camp at Camp Red Leaf again this past summer. From a medical standpoint his Thyroid stopped working this Spring so he is now on a daily synthetic thyroid medicine. We visited the Adult Down Syndrome Clinic in Park Ridge and found out his ability to think visually and to recall vivid visual memories is quite typical.

Soooooooooooo once again if you have made it this far I thank you for reading and for sharing and for understanding. I am always pleased to answer any questions anyone may have and hope you get to see Flynn sometime.

Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,

Jay Marshall, the red haired man for whom Flynn is named.

P.S. It is time to go pick Flynn up from the Dance!