Chrissy and Stephen

Contributed by Laura
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Precious Blessings

By their mother, Angela

Prenatal Diagnosis and Adoption Story, written by the adoptive mother.

Hi, my name is Angela, and I have a four and half year old daughter who has a severe disability. Please share this story if you like, so that birthmother's who are carrying to term a child with a negative prenatel diagnosis might know of the love and joy their precious cargo can bring to their own family or to another family!!

Our Chrissy is adopted. Her birthmother had no prenatal care, and went to the hospital in labor. On ultrasound, it was discovered her baby had an enlarged head and was breach. So Chrissy was born by c-section and taken immediately for an MRI. She was diagnosed within 24 hours as having hydranencephaly. Hydranencephaly is a severe neurological condition that basically means the child is missing most of the brain, and sometimes has only the brain stem to support life.

Chrissy's birthmom had been planning on giving up this child for adoption and had even spoken with the hospital social worker in prior weeks to find a family to take her baby. But when this devastating news was revealed, the social worker was not sure she could find a home for this baby.

The social worker called around to several agencies, finally locating the one our family had registered with two years prior for a special needs child. We are an adoptive family and had already adopted two healthy children in 1989 and 1993. We felt called to adopt again, and knew this time it would be a special needs child. But until December 2000, we had not heard from our agency and had just about given up hope that we would be placed with another child.

When Chrissy was five days old, our adoption agency called us to see if we would consider this very special baby. It was predicted that she might only live weeks. We were told she might never respond to us, might never even make the drive home. We were told she would forget how to suck, she would be blind, she would be deaf, she would be a "vegetable" and just "lie there" and never smile, or know us. We were asked by the attending pediatrician "Why would you want this child?" Our response was a simple "Why would we not?"

We brought Chrissy home at seven days of age. Not only did she make the trip home, but she also survived surgery at 9 days old when our neurosurgeon placed a shunt for the hydrocephalus (fluid build up in the head). She was home three days later.

Contrary to predictions, Chrissy thrived. She drank from her bottle like a champ. She was alert and obviously could see and hear. Six weeks after her shunt surgery, a repeat MRI showed that her diagnosis should be changed! It was changed to severe Schizencephaly. Though her condition was still severe, she did indeed have more brain tissue than originally thought. Schizencephaly meant that she had a "cleft" in the top of her brain and that area was filled with cerebral fluid. Below that, she had most of her mid-brain intact and her brain stem was fully intact.

Chrissy is a joy and a delight for our family. She does have cerebral palsy and also a seizure disorder. She is non-verbal and non-ambulatory. But she smiles, she laughs, she plays, she responds, she loves and she lives!! She is a beautiful little girl with a strong, happy spirit. We are so blessed to have her!

Because of Chrissy, and our wonderful experience in parenting her, our family has since adopted another special needs

child. Our Stephen is now three years old.

His birthmom found out when she was 7 months pregnant that he would have Spina Bifida and chose to place him for adoption. We were again blessed to be able to take another special angel into our family. Stephen is right on track cognitively. Though he was supposed to be paraplegic and paralyzed from the waist down, Stephen is standing on his own now and will be fitted with braces soon so that he can walk! He is determined to prove all doctor's dire predictions to be way off course! What an inspiration he is!!

I know that it is so hard for a mother to hear that the child she is bearing will have disabilities. I know some make the agonizing decision to place their child for adoption, and some decide to parent themselves. I also know the joy and light these special children can bring into the lives of all those around them. It isn't easy to parent a child with severe disabilities. It takes a lot of time and a ton of effort on a daily basis! But it is so worth it!! And if a birthmom doesn't feel that she or her family can handle this tremendous committment, I hope they will realize that there are families out there who will be able to do it - and would love to have the opportunity and blessing of raising a special child!!

I am sharing a picture of both my special angels, in the hopes that their sweet faces will not only give a grieving birthfamily inspiration - but also hope for their child's future!! Doctor's can "predict" what they think a child's disabilities will be, and they may even be right most of the time, but NEVER EVER discount what unconditional love, determination and a family who cares can do for that child!! Miracles happen every day in the most extraordinary ways!!