

## WORDS OF WISDOM FROM A MOM

James' mother Rose is an integral part of the Thames Valley Children's Centre in London, Ontario. Rose works with over fifty therapists and has learned a great deal about abilities. After her son James was diagnosed with Down syndrome, she turned her vivacious energy to providing support to others in the same situation. Advisor to the President of the London Down Syndrome Association, Rose lives their vision "Shaping Our Lives for a Better Future." This is her story.

### LOVE HAS NO LIMITS

In November 1997, I was in my doctor's office for my pregnancy check-up and I learned the amniocentesis results were positive for Down syndrome. I broke down in tears. All kinds of thoughts and questions were going through my mind. What would be our future? While imagining the impact this would have on my family, at least my daughter Kathleen would have a brother to love. I went home and told my husband.

We were in shock. If we discontinued the pregnancy, I could not live in peace with myself for the rest of my life wondering what could have been. My parents taught me to respect everyone. My husband was on both sides of the fence, going back and forth with the idea. Aware of my views, he supported me. I was so relieved that we were both looking forward in the same direction. We knew this baby would be loved no matter what. He would be accepted for who he was - a unique individual.

I knew in my heart and soul I would love this child, and needed time to prepare for his birth. The Internet, Chapter's Bookstore, support groups, and work colleagues were my main sources of information. I read several books and articles, spoke to parents of children with Down syndrome, and pre-registered with organizations. I wanted to absorb as much information as possible to be the best mother to my child.

On June 5<sup>th</sup> 1998, James was born weighing 7 lbs. 13 oz and two weeks premature. Minutes before my delivery, I told the nurse my baby's diagnosis was Trisomy 21-DS. As he was being delivered, my husband confirmed that James did indeed have Down syndrome. I asked to see James and was intrigued by his beautiful eyes. I was so happy. Down syndrome was secondary. James was accepted and loved long before he was born and his four-year-old sister was happy to have a baby brother.

James is now 20 months old. He recovered from open-heart surgery at 6 months of age. He is a happy good-natured little boy who marvels at other people's faces. Exceptionally social, he loves to interact with people. James enjoys swimming, music and is beginning to take his first steps.

Having a child with a disability involves extra time, devotion, and understanding. The key to his success is early intervention and support from the medical field, our community, a loving home, and acceptance for the beautiful child he is. James is indeed an extraordinary part of our family.

Rose Price, London, Ontario