

What Tracy Has Taught Us

Sibling's Perspective

The Voice, Spring 2015

By Sharon (sister) and Shawn Humberson (niece)

Sharon's Story

I was 25 years old and the mother of three very active little girls (including Shawn, age 7 at the time) when my parents came to me and asked if I would be embarrassed having a sibling at my age. I was thrilled for them. Although my dad had two grown daughters, my step-mother had never had a child. At 35 years old she had given up and was content to be the best grandmother there ever was to my children. The birth was difficult and my new sister, Tracy, was in the incubator for some time; and didn't come home from the hospital until she was about 2 weeks old. We knew there were problems but had no idea to what extent.



We all loved her, but the road, even then, was rocky. We couldn't understand why she cried so much. I began to resent her because she made my parents argue; which hurt my folks. In time, we all knew she was "retarded." When we, and I should say I, finally accepted her as she was (my kids were so much ahead of me), it changed the way I thought of her and other people like her. Every place you go, you look for avenues that can be used by the handicapped. You look to see if there is enough space for a wheelchair to turn. When you see other handicapped people, you go up and talk to them; not stare and whisper.

Our entire family has been taught by Tracy to be accepting of differences in people and situations. They are more open to new ideas, different cultures, and are more empathetic. My daughters who were student helpers to the DD students are now 30 years later still loved by those people. My grandchildren have been praised in their classes for being more open to learning a foreign language. They are quick to befriend anyone who is disadvantaged physically or mentally. Tracy has taught us all to be kinder and gentler people.

My parents were given a poem, "[Heaven's Special Child](#)" (by Edna Massionilla, December 1981) quite some time ago, which put it beautifully and I will include a portion:

Please Lord, find the parents who
Will do a special job for You.
They will not realize right away
The leading role they're asked to play.
But with this child sent from above
Comes strong faith and richer love.

And soon they'll know the privilege given
In caring for their gift from Heaven.
Their precious charge so meek and mild
Is Heaven's Very Special Child."

We are so glad He picked this family.

Shawn's Story



One might say I've been an advocate since I was seven years old; when my aunt, Tracy, was born. Tracy stole our hearts from the start. I was too young to truly realize the implications of cerebral palsy and profound mental retardation. I just knew she was a sweet, little baby, my aunt.

Early on, I would hold Tracy and rock her. I would help Grandma by entertaining Tracy. I remember thinking it wasn't fair that Tracy couldn't eat a candy bar so I chewed one up until it was soft enough to feed to her. My sisters and I would play with Tracy; giving her balls and toys that she would throw with her good arm. She was good! She would sometimes wait until one of us bent over and she would throw the item at our backsides! As she and I got older, we would help with her basic needs; feedings and changing.

Looking back, I realize that growing up having an aunt with profound disabilities instilled in me a deep respect for and acceptance of diversity which is not limited to persons with disabilities. While I may have been angry with God for not answering my prayers to make Tracy "normal," it occurs to me that she was meant to be the way she is. Tracy has taught me that everyone has a purpose in this life; regardless of the color of their skin, how much money they have, or whether or not they have a disability.

I started being Tracy's voice at a young age. Thanks to Tracy, I am involved with Friends of Wyoming Life Resource Center (founded by my parents in 2011) and VOR Co-State Coordinator for Wyoming. In the past two years, I've become a stronger, louder voice; not just for Tracy but for all persons with developmental disabilities.

