

We are so blessed to have Jared

Our precious son was born on March 31, 2001 and was diagnosed with Down syndrome. We did not know of the diagnosis prior to his birth, so we were very surprised. We immediately took action by researching resources to get him as well as to get us what would be needed to get us through this family opportunity. Very early in our journey, my husband came across some information regarding Stepping Stones. When I called to make an appointment to visit, I said the following "I just had a son 2 weeks ago who was born with Down syndrome, and we would like to visit your school". The woman on the other end said "Congratulations - what did you name him". For a moment, I was rendered speechless because everyone that we had told prior to that phone call (except our family) had acted as if we told them that our baby died at birth. That someone who was on the other end of the phone was Judy Bellina.

Judy's positive tone that one day immediately snapped me out from under the dark cloud that had tried to envelope me. We pressed our way to visit the school and we were greeted with so much support. A few of the staff members asked to hold our baby and we were amazed at how receptive they were to him as well as to us and to our other child who was 2 1/2 years old at the time.

I can't quite say what I expected when we visited, but what I saw in the gym that day was a lot of happy kids learning and playing with toys that were much like the toys that I saw in our "typical" child's daycare. There were other "therapy" type toys that were far cooler than your typical toys. Anyway, we decided immediately that we wanted our child to attend the Early Intervention Program and he started when he was 5 months old. Our child learned so much at Stepping Stones. Not only was it a place of support for him, but for us as well. Our daughter was welcomed by "Ms. Peggy" into the Sibling Class where she looked forward to going to every Tuesday and Thursday morning. We enjoyed the "Parent Sessions" once our son turned 2. When our son "aged out" of early intervention, we were so happy when we received support from our school district to leave him at Stepping Stones for preschool.

Our son learned so much during those years at preschool. Stepping Stones was such a good foundation for him. The school prepared him academically as well as socially for when he entered kindergarten in his current school. The teachers and volunteers are so awesome at Stepping Stones. The opportunity to interact with other families is phenomenal. We still maintain a relationship with so many of the families that we met during our years at Stepping Stones.

We continue to remain connected with Stepping Stones by attending ARC sponsored functions such as the "Tricky Tray" each February. We hope to remain connected with Stepping Stones for years to come.

Sincerely Veronica & Leon Morton (son: Jared)