

Diamonds

by Rachel Julian

Being a special needs mom – there is no handbook, there is no special preparation or training, and once you are one, you are one for life. And it's not fair. It's not easy, but it is your reality. It is my reality. It is messy, painful, gut-wrenching, exhausting, heartbreaking, endless, thankless, frightening, AND beautiful ...all at the same time. The beauty doesn't make the negative disappear in the slightest, but it IS there. Later I will tell you why it matters.

First, however, I want to be transparent enough that there is no place for me to come across as Pollyanna, super spiritual, or supermom. The last thing any of us need is to read something from a mom who says life is "easy" and "rosy" all the time. I am a mom of two very unique, very challenging, very amazing, and very gifted kids. Abbie, my oldest, is the one with special needs. Were I to try and explain all of her diagnoses, the next few pages would be filled. Abbie is overdiagnosed and very misunderstood. Because of the complexity of her processing and learning styles, every specialist comes back with a different IQ, different disability, and so forth. One beautiful thing about Abbie, has always been her love of being around people, her inquisitive nature, her calm and gentle spirit, and her desire to get to know everyone. After spending four years in the public schools in New York, she developed a horrible and crippling anxiety disorder – one which began to chip away at all that was Abbie, one that ultimately led my family to lay everything down to move across the country, nowhere near our support systems, for her to attend a school that we believed could reach the Abbie that we had lost. There were days (mostly at the beginning) that I thought the very life of me had been sucked out. I went to some low places; on my



worst days I would cry for hours. I didn't know how I would survive.

I got on some great meds for about a year, forced myself to have an identity outside of my child, and found a friend who I was very comfortable sharing the worst thoughts and feelings I experienced (and who still loves me by the way). For many, seeing a counselor is a great idea. I have a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and have been providing counseling for our church members over the past decade. Because of this, my husband was able to use some of the tactics I taught him to actually help me. This is where I want to say that if you are "new" to the diagnosis, if you are in a dark, lonely place, please don't go there alone. Seek counseling. Find a friend who can look at the nasty of you, the fear, the anger, or whatever you might be dealing with, and still love you. I also want to stress to all the Mommas out there that it is actually a good thing that your husband can't "understand" the depth

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MISSION STATEMENT

FOCUS understands and supports the unique needs of families with children who are medically fragile or have significant developmental or physical disabilities. FOCUS offers comfort, hope and information to parents; accessible recreational and social programs for children and teens; and fun, inclusive activities for the entire family. A nonprofit founded by parents in 1983, FOCUS continues to embrace and strengthen metro Atlanta families.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

For subscription information, please call FOCUS at (770) 234-9111 or visit our website at www.focus-ga.org. Annual subscriptions to the newsletter are \$15 for families (waived if necessary) and \$30 for professionals.

Check the Calendar!

Remember to check the calendar on our website for upcoming events! We have "Fridays at FOCUS," a party just for parents, and several great fund raisers.

Now's a good time to get involved. Come to FOCUS for Comfort, Hope, Fun!

www.focus-ga.org/calendar/

Have You Moved or Changed Your Email Address?

If you do not receive weekly emails from FOCUS through Constant Contact, we either do not have your current email OR your email provider thinks we are spam. Call 770-234-9111 or email inquiry@focus-ga.org and we'll try to fix the problem!

**From the Editor**

by Lucy Cusick

Fall is lots of fun at FOCUS, with several big annual events: Under the Stars 2, Mom's Day Off, MVP Events, OctoberFest ... all amongst the comfort and hope of Share Groups and Extra Special Saturday respites! No time to be inspirational and write an article – it's too busy around here!! So, like every good 'boss' (they let me 'think' I'm in charge) I requested a short blurb from each of the FOCUS staffers. We did this three years ago and had lots of good feedback. Most folks don't know 'who does what' or what we really do in the FOCUS office – the 'behind the scenes' for all of our programs is time consuming and so important. In fact, we often hear comments about how many people are on staff here. Believe me, it takes a village – at almost every FOCUS event, someone from FOCUS (often more than one!) is there to make sure each program is safe and well-run. We have hundreds of fabulous volunteers who provide the FUN while the FOCUS staff deals with details.

So, here, in the order of the most recently hired – so we can also welcome Brian Darden to FOCUS – are the FOCUS Girls. Oops. The FOCUS STAFF!

BRIAN DARDEN

I actually worked at Camp Twin Lakes when I experienced my first FOCUS event. I was a "cabin buddy" at Camp Infinity with some of the most spirited young men that I have ever met! (Little did I know, I was spending the week with Lucy's son, Josh!) I again spent time with FOCUS at Under the Stars Family



Camp in August and got to know some incredible families. I interviewed with FOCUS in late August, and the rest is history! I started in September and it has been an incredible experience so far. I have the privilege of coordinating the events for the Teens & Young Adults and FOCUS' own swim team, FAST Fins. I also coordinate the many volunteers for all of our events and programs.

In just two months, I have helped at Aquarium Day, Under the Stars 2, and Bowling with teens and young adults. I am looking forward to the upcoming FAST Fins Swim Meet where kids and parents will celebrate a season of hard work. I'm a little nervous about coordinating the volunteers for FOCUS on Fashion – but I can't wait to see the models on stage! I also cannot wait for the upcoming events for teens & young adults. They are truly some of my favorite people. Working at FOCUS has been amazing these first two months, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds!

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FOCUS Staff*(Continued from page 2)*

A little more about Brian: While in college, Brian was a counselor at Sparrowwood at Camp Glisson for two summers and loved working with the campers with special needs. He graduated from Georgia Southern University in 2012 and interned at Camp Twin Lakes until August 2014. We are excited to have Brian with us and know he will love our kiddos and families as much as we do!

KARYN CAMPAGNONE

My husband and I have three boys; Tyler, our oldest, has Down Syndrome. We've been involved at FOCUS for ... ever! I don't really know how long. We especially love family events because our younger boys see other siblings and enjoy being with them. Tyler – and the other boys – enjoyed Camp Hollywood this past summer.



I love not being the newest FOCUS employee!! I have been working at FOCUS almost a year and am still learning about all the programs. It has been an eye-opening experience – I had no idea how much preparation each program requires OR how many programs FOCUS offers! I plan Camp Hollywood, talk to new parents, help with registration for family activities, and pretty much anything else I'm asked to do!

I went through the unknown after Tyler was born and I love giving other parents 'hope,' just like FOCUS gave to me.

**ELIZABETH HEWELL**

I have been married for over 23 years to my wise and good lookin' husband Mark. We have two children together: Stephen who is 18 and Katharine who is in heaven waiting on us. Our story with FOCUS started when Katharine was born. She had hydrocephalous, epilepsy, developmental delay, and was medically fragile. We were in the hospital

when a nurse told us about FOCUS. I contacted them and Joy came to visit. She brought a Beanie Baby white duck for Katharine and chocolate for me; most importantly, she listened. I was hooked. After that visit, we became an active part of the FOCUS family: from share groups to Six Flags day to Camp Hollywood, FOCUS became a bigger part of our lives. We finally realized we were not alone.

I started working for FOCUS when Katharine was in preschool. This gave me an opportunity to encourage, educate, and listen to other families that needed support. I departed from FOCUS for a short time and then returned in 2011. I am surrounded by families that need hope for the future, a place to vent, someone to listen, a day of fun, and

wisdom from someone who has lived from birth to death with a child with special needs. I continue to be amazed by the strength, power, and gratefulness of our FOCUS parents. Your children are amazing and they have truly made an impact on my life and others who care for them. It is my hope to simply allow you to make long lasting memories with your children.

At FOCUS, I like to consider myself the comfort, hope, and fun coordinator. I have the privilege of coordinating the events for medically fragile children and their families (known at FOCUS as MVP Events), the hospital visitation program, FOCUS on Moms event, share group coordinator, and more FOCUS programs. I also help with other programs such as Camp Hollywood, Extra Special Saturday respite, and family activities. Mark and I have adopted into our lives two simple words: no regrets. We took Katharine everywhere we went, we love our children to the fullest; we made decisions that were right and some that were wrong, and we learned to simply let go and enjoy life.

CELIA LAWTON

I believe our children were about three years old when they attended their first FOCUS program. So incredibly, we have been a FOCUS family for fourteen years now! Kirk and Scott were just toddlers when my husband (Frank) and I dropped them off for the first time at Extra Special Saturday all those years ago. This May they will graduate from high school, and we will be entering into a brand new world of caring for adults with special needs.



It is an understatement to say that the time has just flown by, but it is not an understatement to say that FOCUS has been right there with us all along the way. In fact, thanks to FOCUS, we have been able to participate in numerous activities that we would have never been brave enough to try on our own with two autistic children.

Just for kicks, I thought I would make a list of all of our FOCUS "adventures," in a somewhat chronological order of the dates that we first tried them: Extra Special Saturday, Camp Hollywood, Under the Stars, Holiday Party, Zoo Day, FOCUS Fashion Show, Annual Education Conference, Monthly Education Workshops, Parent Support Groups, Six Flags Day, FAST Fins Swim Team, Aquarium Day, Teen Group/OctoberFest.

Even though I work at FOCUS, I have to admit that I was amazed by this list in two different ways. First, I saw just how much my family has done with FOCUS throughout Kirk and Scott's childhood. There's a whole lot of "Comfort, Hope, and Fun" that we have received from

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FOCUS Staff*(Continued from page 3)*

these programs! Second, it also reinforced what I already knew – that FOCUS invests a great deal of time and energy to provide exceptional programming to Atlanta-area families with special needs children.

FOCUS is very unique – and it is my job to describe this uniqueness to funding organizations in such a way that they will be encouraged to support us financially. This is a very pleasurable job responsibility for me, because I am not only writing about an organization that I believe in, but I am writing about an organization that benefits my immediate family and my “extended FOCUS family” as well.

KAREN GREENFIELD

My family moved to the metro area in 1997. At that time, we had a nine year old son, Kyle, who had Sanfilippo, a degenerative genetic syndrome. Kyle brought us in contact with FOCUS; I first became involved through Share groups, sharing our daily struggles, learning about services that are offered in the state of Georgia and just hearing where everyone else is in their special needs journeys. Kyle participated in FOCUS respites and Camp Hollywood, summer day camps.



Kyle died in 2001, but I continued to be involved with the FOCUS through the Bereavement group and volunteering. I didn't want to leave my new found special needs family and was eager to share my knowledge and experiences with other parents that have children with special needs. I began to work at FOCUS in 2003 as the respite and camp coordinator. I also help out with the teen and young adult activities, family events, and wherever there is a need. I love being directly involved with the children and have watched many of them grow up! I have learned many lessons at FOCUS: to love our children for who they are and what they CAN do; to allow children time to be just kids, and to keep your toes out of the way of wheelchairs! I am so thankful for the opportunity to work with our wonderful children!

**PATTY VASTAKIS**

Like many of the other FOCUS staff, I volunteered for FOCUS before I came on as a staff member. My sister Anna found FOCUS after the premature birth of her son, Nick, in 1989. Our big Greek family surrounded Anna and her family after Nick's birth, but we never really knew what to say or do. FOCUS helped her find resources

and information after Nick was diagnosed with cerebral palsy; Anna was a regular at the Dekalb Share Group and found that she liked helping other parents. I volunteered with her at the very first FOCUS fashion show, helped at the dinner dance, and was then recruited as the office manager. Funny, my biggest fear about working at FOCUS was that I wouldn't have enough to do ... that's a laugh! Our programs have grown so much that my desk is never completely clean!

My job at FOCUS is more than just a desk job; I also love going to programs (mostly family activities, family camp, and fund raisers) and meeting the families that I've talked to on the phone and read about in the newsletter. Our family continues to support FOCUS, out of gratitude for helping my sister and out of admiration for the wonderful children and families.

JOY TROTTI

I attended my first share group in 1992 as a mom to toddler Rachel Trotti, who had red hair and multiple health and developmental challenges. Soon after, Lucy recruited me to join the board, and I stayed after Rachel died in 1994. Five years later, Lucy came recruiting again – this time for the position of associate director.



Over the years at FOCUS, I've had various program and administrative responsibilities. Now my favorite jobs are planning Under the Stars Family Camp and family activities such as Six Flags, Aquarium, and Zoo Days. I also like supervising the SibShop group, as well as college interns. In my 'spare' time, I write grants and develop the annual report, as well as being a human resources department of one! Working at FOCUS is truly a dream job for me – I love the children, families and staff!

Six years ago, my doctor diagnosed me with cancer, and during a few years of surgeries and treatments, I discovered how supportive and wonderful the FOCUS staff and families really are! I am now cancer-free and enjoy time with my husband James and occasional game days at UGA when we see our daughter Rebekah, a sophomore, and cheer for the Bulldogs.

**LUCY CUSICK**

I attended my first Share Group in 1987, two years after Josh's premature birth and subsequent diagnosis with cerebral palsy. I left that meeting, ready for the next one! I honestly did not know there were other parents out there who were as overwhelmed and scared as I

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it's time to renew your FOCUS membership!

Please renew your FOCUS membership by returning this form OR donate on-line at www.focus-ga.org

Annual Membership Contribution

Please make checks payable to FOCUS or complete the credit card information and mail to:

FOCUS • 3825 Presidential Parkway, Suite 103 • Atlanta, GA 30340

Yes! I would like to contribute to FOCUS:

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Other Ways to Support FOCUS

FOCUS depends on donations from individuals, foundations and corporations to keep the cost of programs low to families. Here are a few easy ways to support FOCUS – **spread the word to friends and family!**

Amazon Smile – Name FOCUS as your beneficiary (listed as Families Of Children Under Stress, Inc.)

Kroger – Register for community awards (#37957).

State employees may contribute to FOCUS through the State Charitable Contributions Program by using #197007.

Federal employees may contribute to FOCUS through the Combined Federal Campaign by using #76177.

Georgia Gives Day is Thursday, November 13, 2014. Go to www.gagivesday.org and search Families Of Children Under Stress

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was. While I know many parents think support groups are depressing, I find them comforting. It helped to talk to other moms who were a little ahead and to maybe help a mom who was a little behind me.

As I learned 'the system,' I discovered that parenting a child with special needs involved lots of decisions. Walker or wheelchair? Self-contained class or inclusion? Eat in or take out? I discovered that I am not a black-and-white person. I love gray. I love options. So, Josh did walk with a walker, but never all that well. As an adult, he uses his power chair; but he bears weight enough to be independent at home. While I believe in inclusion, I do not believe inclusion is the best for everyone. I do believe that you 'start at the top' and work your way from there. Josh was fully included all through school, but, as an adult, he has enjoyed social and recreational activities with his peers with disabilities. As for food? If it's fixed for me, I don't care what it is!!

In 1992, I started working a few hours a week for FOCUS, visiting families in the hospital, calling new parents, and facilitating a support group. In August 1994, Susan Calhoun resigned for health reasons and the board of directors asked me to become the executive director. Honestly, the timing was not great; Josh was in school all day, but Jessica was still in preschool. Nevertheless, I was ready to work again after being a mostly stay-at-home mom for 5 years. So, the FOCUS office moved from the Calhoun's living room to the Cusick's basement. The office consisted of one computer (that I really didn't know how to use), a desk and filing cabinet, a copier, and a fax machine. After a few years, we needed our basement back and FOCUS needed more space, so we moved to an office park and into our first office! There were three of us by then, all part-time, but we were proud of that little office!!

I have learned a lot about the nonprofit world over the years. I wear many hats at FOCUS and do a little of everything, from troubleshooting computer problems to hauling and moving camp to meeting with donors. My biggest job is the responsibility I feel when the kids are in the care of FOCUS. I am known for constantly counting kids at every program.

When we have a new parent call FOCUS, my heart aches a little for them. While their lives will be rich and full, they will also have many difficulties and heartache. My platform to new families is that this life can be so hard – you must take breaks (respite, camp, mom's day off!), have fun (family activities and family camp!), plan ahead (workshops and conferences), and pace yourself (sorry, some things you must do for yourself!), but this life has such joy. One smile says it all. ■

Coming Up at FOCUS!

Always check the calendar at www.focus-ga.org for the details of all programs!

November 1

FAST Fins Swim Meet
at Mountain View Aquatics Center

November 2

FOCUS on Fashion
at Oglethorpe University

November 8

FOCUS Day at Zoo Atlanta
Sold out event!

November 30

Snacks with Santa for Medically Fragile Families
RSVP to elizabeth@focus-ga.org

Check the calendar for Extra Special Saturday respite and other on-going programs.

Saturday, December 6

Annual FOCUS & Lekotek Holiday Party

11:30 am to 2 pm

Eastminster Presbyterian Church
5801 Hugh Howell Road, Stone Mountain

Join FOCUS & Lekotek for food, fun, arts, crafts, and music. FOCUS will provide the fried chicken and Lekotek will provide the drinks and paper goods. If your name begins with:

A-N Please bring a vegetable or side dish
O-T Please bring a dessert
U-Z Please bring bread

For easy clean-up, please bring food for 10 or more people in a disposable dish with a disposable serving utensil. Call FOCUS or email Karen@focus-ga.org by December 4 and register the number of adults and children attending. Santa brings each child a small gift so we need an accurate count; please limit attendees to immediate family since we have limited space and Santa's workshop is pretty busy this time of year!!

Directions to Eastminster Presbyterian:

Take I-285 to 78 East. Take Exit 7 (Hugh Howell Road) and go up the hill to the second church on the left. Families should enter the church through Founders Hall – follow signs & look for balloons!

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 In honor of Amanda
 McGrath's adoption of
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 Brenna Farahvashi
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 Megan Lee
 Anne McCoun
 Meghan Moore
 Ruthie Peavy
 Mark, Jenny & Ellie Rockett
 Marla Smith
 Barbara Wood
 Ashley Zobrosky



FOCUS Climbs for Kids Sponsors

Dr. Robert Bruce
 Angie & Skip Weiland

FOCUS Climbs for Kids was a huge success! Twenty teams – a FOCUS kiddo and a FOCUS Friend – climbed together, faced their fears and scaled the wall! This event raised OVER \$20,000 – and participants had lots of FUN! Many thanks to the many donors (too many to list!!) our sponsors, to Stone Summit, and to Catalyst Sports for their support and help with this event.



TEAM FOCUS

Rides in Spin for Kids

TEAM FOCUS was 40 riders strong and raised over \$16,000 at Spin for Kids! We are thrilled to start 2015 with a 'credit' at Camp Twin Lakes for FOCUS programs: Camp Infinity and OctoberFest and Under the Stars Family Camps. Thanks to our riders and donors for their energy and support!

The Basics of Sleep

By Kathie Teta

It seems that as we age, sleep issues multiply. There is so much to do during our busy days. It is hard to turn our minds off and stop activities to allow for adequate sleep. Some children have the same problems. Their days are also busy, filled with long bus rides to school, extensive school days, homework, therapies, sport activities, play, and family time.

Many children do not get adequate sleep and may have difficulties falling asleep and/or staying asleep. Required sleep for toddlers/preschoolers is 11 to 13 hours per night; school-age children 10 to 11 hours per night; and adolescents 9 hours per night. Most young children stop taking naps by age 5. Taking naps infrequently is acceptable for older children, but taking naps daily after school will affect the school-aged child and adolescent's ability to fall asleep at night. Caffeine can also affect sleep and should be avoided, especially after lunchtime.

Lack of sleep has been associated with many physical and psychosocial problems. These include inattention and poor focus in school, difficulty with learning and comprehension, behavioral issues, increase in seizures, headaches, anxiety and depression.

Routines are important for helping a child or adolescent fall asleep. There should be a set bedtime and arousal time for all children, even during the summer months. One hour before bedtime should be designated "quiet time" and should be used for preparing for the next day (picking out school clothes, organizing backpack, assisting in making lunch for school), quiet play or conversation, and reading time. All electronics should be turned off during this time, as many devices are over-stimulating and can affect sleep. Electronic equipment that should be avoided during this time includes phones, video games, computers or iPads, television, and radio/music devices. Portable electronic equipment (such as cell phones) should be charged in a room other than the child's bedroom to prevent interruptions in sleep from messages, emails, etc.

If a child expresses a need for (or seems to need) some type of noise to assist with onset of sleep, then "white noise" is recommended. White noise is a consistent noise that comes from a fan or a "white noise" machine. These machines provide nature sounds, such as ocean waves, gentle rain, or cricket sounds, that are soothing and can assist with sleep. Use of a television or radio at bedtime provides inconsistent sounds that interfere with the quality of sleep and can affect sleep onset and duration of quality sleep.

Some children may need testing to rule out a sleep disorder, and some may need medications to assist with sleep if the above recommendations are not helpful. Parents can discuss this further with a pediatrician, neurologist, or sleep specialist. Keeping a journal is very effective in seeing patterns of sleep/nonsleep.

Parents' quality of sleep should improve as a child's sleep improves since there should be fewer awakenings and interruptions for everyone! Sweet Dreams! ■

Kathie Teta, FOCUS Board President and a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner with PANDA Neurology, will present more information on sleep disorders in children at the annual FOCUS Conference on January 31, 2015.

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of your emotion. I remember one day, toward the beginning of our journey, after I had been crying, my husband crawled in bed next to me to hold me. What he said to me, I will never forget. "Rachel, I love you, but I can't go there with you. I wish I could, but I can't." Kids pick up on the emotional climate of their parents, and I am so thankful I was married to someone who balanced that emotional climate in our household. Your spouse's inability to feel as you do does not mean he/she doesn't love you or your child.

I also decided to find other families that were a part of the special needs world. Wow – did this affect my life! Earlier this week I had lunch with a friend, someone I have only met twice, yet we were there for THREE hours, talking as if we had known each other for years. When you meet someone who is in the same "world," there is an understanding; there is a different depth to those friendships. You know, without ever having to utter it, that you are looking into the eyes of someone who has experienced pain, loss, fear, hope, hopelessness, sacrifice, resentment, wavering resolve, adjustment to dreams, and so much more.

I also made the decision to fight the mind battle. This is where I want to tell you why the beauty in this special needs world of yours is so important. One thing I have always said to people I have counseled and coached is, "You always find what you are looking for." I believe this with every ounce of my being.

There are so many hard things about having a child with special needs. The strain on you, your kids, your spouse, your marriage, your finances, and your decisions; these things will never go away. However, if you look for the beauty – the character development, the depth of friendships you can have, what your child CAN offer/do/be

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Looking Back at the Fun ...

FOCUS on Moms – August 23

FOCUS moms had a wonderful day of pampering, information, and fun! Thanks to First Christian Church of Atlanta for hosting, the Junior League of Atlanta for volunteering, Pampering With A Purpose / Mary Kay for their ongoing support, and to all the presenters and speakers!



Moms' Day Off – October 18

Moms' Day Off on Lake Lanier was a blast! Many thanks to all the moms who brought yummy food to share! The winners of the "Iron Chef Mom" were Angela Perez (Pico De Gallo and Guacamole – Spicy), Cindy Banaszak (Coconut Cream Pie Dip – Sweet), and Norma Stanley (Curry Chicken Salad – Salty). Everyone had a blast, relaxing and enjoying the boat for the day. Thanks to Captain Tommy Bagwell for his hospitality!



Under the Stars 2 – October 3-5

"Under the Stars Wars" at Camp Twin Lakes Winder was as fun as Under the Stars Wars in August!! We filled the camp with about 50 families!

Parent "Time Out" Party, with Dare to Hope Foundation – September 6

All parents need a Time Out once in a while! Our thanks to Holy Cross Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, Dare to Hope Foundation and all the wonderful volunteers.



FOCUS Day at the Georgia Aquarium – September 21

FISH Day! FOCUS Family Activities are popular because families love being one of a crowd, instead of standing out in a crowd! Thanks to FOCUS fund raisers for supporting these fun activities.

Diamonds

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(and there is always something, even if your child is nonverbal and lacks mobility), the new opportunities, YOU WILL FIND THEM!!! When you allow yourself to be redefined and changed, there will be new ways to hope. At most jewelry stores, diamonds are placed on black stands or backdrops because they shine brighter against the darkness. Look for your diamonds. The darkness, the messy, the pain is still there, but you get to choose which to embrace. I sometimes issue the 30 day challenge – for the next 30 days, every day, write one thing you are thankful for – no matter how big or how small. I go back and do this myself when I find myself in a “self pity” or “child pity” party. It is amazing to discover the beauty in your life that you would not have if life was easier.

You see, the world may not recognize the beauty and worth in your child, but we can change the world by changing ourselves. For me, I had to first truly believe in my core that my child had equal value. No matter what your child can or cannot do, he or she has equal value to others. Abbie may never add and subtract, multiply and divide, read, write, or move like the world says she should. She may never make lots of

money, drive a car, or live on her own, but there are so many people who can do those things who will never know the purity of spirit that Abbie possesses. They may never take their eyes off themselves to see into people’s hearts the way Abbie does. They most certainly will not want to pray at every tombstone in every cemetery the way Abbie does. They may not have the time or interest in others to notice the slight change in emotion, a two inch haircut, or a new picture in someone’s office. They may not laugh every time they run or lack the ability to judge harshly. Those are a few of my Abbie diamonds.

As I end this, I ask you, what are your diamonds? Sometimes you must dig deep and get dirty in the process. We may be unable to control many things in life, but the one thing we always have power over is what we think on and where we dwell internally. So with that being said, get out your shovel and bucket and go find those diamonds! Life is BRUTIFUL! ■

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