

The CIDSO News

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"A Brighter Tomorrow"

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Home on the Range

By Jean Fowler as featured in People Magazine

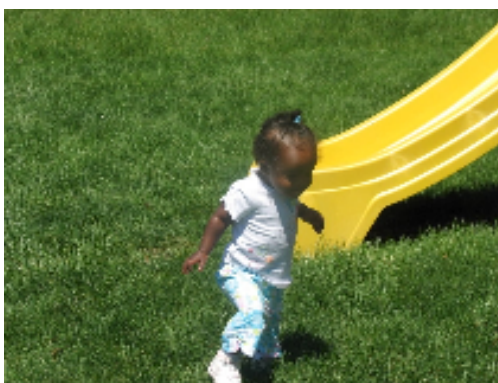
On an arid expanse in Elgin, Texas, the young ranch hands are taking a lunch break. Between bites of hot dogs and chips, Kelly Horton, 22, gives boyfriend Sterling Hibbs an affectionate tickle as they chat with pals. "Come here, get over here;" Horton says, teasingly, as Hibbs scoots away, dearly enjoying the attention.

The camaraderie at the table is obvious—and something Judy and Jerry Horton wondered if Kelly would ever experience when doctors told them the newborn in Judy's arms had Down syndrome. Initially devastated by the news, Jerry recalls how his feelings shifted dramatically those first weeks: "I quickly went from horror at being the father of a kid with a huge intractable disability," he says, "to being completely in love with my child."

He was determined to help her find her place in the world. Sending Kelly, who has three older stepsisters, to both special-needs and mainstream schools, the Hortons noticed early on how young people with Down syndrome would often languish once they reached adulthood, lacking the work and social ties that anchor most people's lives. So when Kelly was 6, the Hortons—both former college administrators—sold their Austin home, took out a \$300,000 loan and bought a hard scrabble piece of land that, over the years, they transformed into Down Home Ranch, a 267-acre spread that since 2001 has housed and employed about a dozen adults with Down syndrome and other disabilities, like cerebral palsy. (The Hortons' first step, in 1995, was to launch a summer camp that now serves up to 400 special-needs kids each season.)

The residents, ages 19 to 36, who pay a sliding-scale fee for room and board with their government disability funds, groom horses, maintain greenhouses, shop for groceries and prepare group meals—tasks which earn them about \$150 a month in spending money. When they're not working, they take cooking, fitness and sign-language classes and go on outings to the bowling alley, shopping mall and opera. For Kelly, and other residents, who are welcome to stay as long as they want, there's no better place to be. "I love this ranch;" Kelly says. "I want to be here a long time."

For more information visit www.downhomeranch.org



Inching Along; Celebrating First Steps

Karen Kinley became an official walker at 18 months when she began taking 2-4 steps at a time. At 19 months, though, she decided to take off and get moving wherever her heart desired. She is a full-time walker and completely adores watching her mom chase her and try to keep her out of trouble!

Busy Board

Members of your CIDSO Board have been busy around town. CIDSO Brochures have been distributed to all of the OBs and Pediatricians in the Bloomington/Normal area. We have long struggled with how to let new parents and parents new to the area who are touched by Down syndrome know about CIDSO. Our hope is those in the medical community will help spread the word..

And The Award Goes To...

The 2008 CIDSO Grants have been awarded. Congratulations to the following applicants:

- Tri-Valley School District (Angie Cole and Jennifer Kinkaid) for science activity tubs.
- Tri-Valley School District (Marty Maginel) for student desk work centers.
- Victory Academy (Jennifer Nettleton) for a cheering academy. These funds help to support "The Advocates" cheer team.

Helping Your Child

"Helping Your Child" Publication series aims to provide parents with the tools and information necessary to help their child succeed in school and life. These booklets feature practical lessons and activities to help school-aged and preschool children master reading, understand the value of homework and develop the skills and values necessary to achieve and grow. Titles include:

- Helping Your Child be a Reader
- Helping Your Child Succeed in School
- Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen
- Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics
- Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence

The publications are free and available in both English and Spanish. All publications are PDF format and may be downloaded from the US Department of Education Website at

www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html

Mark the Date:

July 11-13:

NDSC Conference

July 28:

CIDSO Board Meeting

September 7:

CIDSO Picnic

September 12

Buddy Walk Pre-Registration Due

September 27:

Buddy Walk

Disclaimer Policy

The editor of this newsletter writes as a non-professional. CIDSO does not promote any therapy, treatment, institution or professional system, etc. Please discuss specific concerns with your health care professional.