

# The CIDSO News

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## *"A Brighter Tomorrow"*

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## *The Good Life*

*By Oliver Moll, age 15  
Reprinted from Down Syndrome News, Volume 30 #4*

Growing up with a brother with a disability has made me realize how good my life is, but not for the reasons you might think. My older brother Francis, who is 16, has Down syndrome and many complex needs. He doesn't talk, he doesn't read, and he isn't potty trained. Francis needs help dressing, bathing, and feeding himself. He is supervised all of the time and has a few ongoing medical problems that my parents are on top of. Despite all of this, we would not change a hair on his head. Francis is the greatest guy I know.

As a young child, about four years ago, I realized that my brother was different, but never thought anything of it. I always viewed him as my older brother. As I got older, I realized just how different he was—even from most other people

with disabilities—yet it didn't seem at all strange to me. I never asked any questions about my brother's condition, because, it just never occurred to me to have questions.

In second grade my brother and I were practicing to receive our First Holy Communion. When my mother asked the class if anyone had questions about my brother, the whole church was filled with little raised hands. That's when it dawned on me that I was witness to a different way of life. My experience as Francis' brother was rarer than a Mickey Mantle rookie year baseball card and he was right under my nose the whole time. I always felt special for having Francis as my older brother. I didn't know anybody who had a brother with DS but me.

Reading "Down Syndrome News", I see many highlights of people with DS who have minimal support needs,

and I'm inspired by their accomplishments. I felt compelled, however, to highlight the intangible accomplishments of my brother who has complex needs. To begin with, he's gentle, funny, happy and patient. His complex needs have given my family the unique ability to see life in a different way. We are "unembarassable," don't sweat the small stuff, find humor in all of our shortcomings and we're accustomed to helping one another without resentment.

People ask me if I feel bad for my brother, or if I would want him to be normal. No. My brother has an amazing quality of being able to bring out the best in even the toughest people. If only we were as nice to one another as people are to Francis, the world would be a much better place. My brother, sister, and I often kid around that we're supposedly

*Continued Page 2*

## *The Good Life Continued*

“normal” and there is something wrong with him? When, in fact, he is the best of the four of us.

When I think about my brother’s future, I know it will involve me. I’m not afraid of it; I embrace it as an opportunity to continue to have my brother in my life. I like reading “Down Syndrome News” because I love seeing other people with DS. It brings a smile to my face, seeing other people like Francis evolving, experimenting, and challenging themselves in the

world. However, Francis’ progress is measured in inches, not miles and our family celebrates every inch of his progress as we would for the rest of us kids. I guess what strikes me is the definition of success. If your brother or sister with DS isn’t a movie star or in a rock band or delivering newspapers, figure out what he or she is bringing to the table and celebrate that every day. While many people may strive to be more “normal,” perhaps we should strive to be more like Francis.

Francis and I are more alike than we are different; it is just that the differences have huge practical implications. All things considered, I feel lucky to have him in my life just the way he is. No one can tell us what is going to happen with Francis, but by the same token, no one can tell me what is going to happen to me either. I guess that is just one more thing we have in common, my brother and me.

## *Sibling Support Project*

The Sibling Support Project is a nation effort dedicated to the life-long concerns of brothers and sisters of people who have special health, developmental, or mental health concerns.

Their mission is accomplished by training local service providers on how to create community-based peer support programs for young siblings; hosting workshops, libraries, and websites for young and adult siblings; and increasing parents’ and providers’ awareness of sibling’ unique, lifelong and ever-changing concerns through workshops, websites, and written materials.

Two recent listservs, SibKids (for younger siblings ) and SibNet (for older siblings) allow brothers and sisters an opportunity to connect with their peers around the world. You can learn more by visiting [www.siblingsupport.org](http://www.siblingsupport.org)

## *Recipe for the Perfect Buddy Walk*

Recipe from the CIDSO Buddy Walk Committee (Dawn Mattia, Jean Bates, Christy Bates, Judy Bates, Mindie Crutcher, Brenda Harms, Kathy Peden and Cindy Spain)

Serves: 600

Add the following to Paririeland Elementary School’s Parking Lot and Gym

- |                                       |                               |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Beautiful Day                       | 3 Star Wars Characters        |
| 50+ Volunteers                        | 1 Climbing Wall               |
| 1 Live Band                           | A Generous Amount of Massages |
| Phi Sigma Sigma Sorority              | A Handful of Cheerleaders     |
| 1 Work Out Company Warm Up            | Rico the Police Dog           |
| 46 Great Raffle Prizes                | A Dozen ISU Football Players  |
| 11 Best Buy Employees                 | 68 Gunner Cox Enthusiasts     |
| A Grateful and Tired Buddy Walk Board |                               |

Season to taste with :

- An Undetermined Number of
- Cowboys, Caribbean Cruisers,
- Cougars and 1950’s Fans

Slowly add **600 Buddy Walkers** and bake in the 72 degree sunshire for 3 hours. Repeat yearly as needed.

### **Mark the Date:**

**October 15:**  
*Board Meeting*

**December 2:**  
*Holiday Party and  
Annual Meeting  
3:00 to 7:00 PM*

### *Age 22*

On July 18, 2007, Governor Blagojevich signed House Bill 817 into law. This new law establishes uniformity in the School Code with respect to the definition “children with disabilities” making students statewide eligible to receive special education services up until the day of their 22nd birthday. This reflects the State Board’s interpretation of IDEA’S 3-21 mandate as manifested in its proposed changes to rules and regulations governing special education. It would allow some students to have up to an additional year of eligibility to meet certain transition goals and would facilitate their successful transition into adult life.

#### **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 a professional.

## *Thank You to our Buddy Walk Sponsors*

Staff Infection	Wal-Mart Bloomington
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ISU Art Department	Air Tran
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Prairieland Elementary School	State Farm Insurance
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Afni	ISU Students Serving Individuals with Disabilities
Imperial Walkers	ISU Council for Exceptional Children
Upper Limits	Jenni's Hair Salon
K 9 Unit Normal Police	Weber Electric
Peoria Rivermen	Holiday Inn
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Casey's Garden Shop	Select Screen Print
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Chicago Bulls	Starbucks
Chicago Cubs	Easter Seals
Chicago's Children's Museum	Curves
Children's Discovery Museum	Gordon Ropp
Community Players	Meijers
Country Inn & Suites	Salon G
Culver's	Brad Barker Honda
Domino's Pizza	Rising Stars Academy
Double Tree Hotel	Six Flags, Great America
Eastland Suites	Six Flags, St. Louis
Gill Street	St. Louis Cardinals
Kathryn Beich	The Magic House
Monical's Pizza	The Ultimate Tan
Mrs. Field's	Victory Academy

## *My Healthy Smile*

We have recently obtained a DVD called "My Healthy Smile" which was produced to help people with developmental disabilities better understand oral health issues and hopefully make that trip to the dentist less traumatic. The DVD contains eleven social scripts presented in an engaging slide show format, printable tip sheets and storyboards, and oral health information for parents and dental professionals. If you are interested in borrowing this DVD, please contact Dawn at 750-9164.