

Just As I Am

When CJ was born the doctor said, "He's a mongoloid! These kinds of kids are put into a home. Do you have any questions?" I replied to the doctor, "A home? He has a home; he's going home with me!" The doctor told us that CJ would not live past seven, so I went and bought a plot at a cemetery. CJ is now 42 years old and has filled my life with love and purpose.

Back when CJ was born, I was 22 years old and knew nothing about Down syndrome, so I went to the local library and checked out some books. I was determined to give CJ the very best life possible. CJ's father did not accept him when he was born and he has never been in the picture, so I raised him the best I could as a single mom and now he calls himself "the man of the house" and takes great pride in that.

Everybody around town knows CJ; he is friends with everybody. He does a lot of community service and is famous for his dance performances at community events. CJ has worked for Cabela's for 14 years and won the employee of the month. He loves photography and takes photos for Camp Guardian- a camp that the Missouri National Guard has yearly for members that have special needs children. He also won the Reserve Grand Champion Ribbon for a picture he took of a Holocaust statue while on a trip to Baltimore. In addition, he does ceramics, and participates in Special Olympics.

CJ understands that he is a little different, but God loves him just as much. That's what I always tell him. CJ has made me a better person. If I had to do it all over again, I'd have another CJ...he is perfect in every way.

This poem describes CJ perfectly:

He thinks no evil - does no harm,
his disposition is always calm.
So full of love and kindness too,
he only sees the good in you.
Anger, lust, they're not real.
Such normal impulses he does not feel.
He is innocent, this is true.
Of hate and fear and things we do.
Such perfect trust - so hard to find,
exemplifies his peace of mind.
With eyes upturned and heart sincere,
His thoughts may seem quite far from here.
A deeper knowledge, yet not expressed,
Perhaps he's wiser than the rest.
He's sweet and gentle, meek and mild.
He's our loving Down syndrome child. (Author Unknown)