



BECOMING YOUR BEST

Stories Of Hope And Encouragement

Becoming Your Best Newsletter

Greetings,

Technology is absolutely amazing! With the simple stroke of a key, you can find information on just about any topic of your choice. Often, the information is free!

One popular technological tool whereby people share their thoughts and feelings is by means of a blog, blog site, or blogspot. These have become very popular and are a great way to make connections on a topic of interest.

This issue will feature articles from two different blogs. The first is actually from a blog site about running. The author is an avid runner—which is obvious when you view his site.

The author is Luau and his site is called Run Luau Run. You can view it at <http://runluaurun.com>. Luau is also the parent of a child on the autism spectrum and recently wrote a great article that will touch any parent's heart.

Our second article is from a blog site called Kareen's Journey Home. It can be seen at <http://kareensjourneyhome.blogspot.com/>. This is a follow up to an article we featured in our January 2011 newsletter.

This blogspot is written by Kecia, who, along with her husband, were in the process of adopting Mia Kareen—a child with Down syndrome from the Ukraine. In this article, Kecia shares her thoughts and feelings about their newest family member and what it means to finally have her here in America.

Submit your inspirational stories to: stories@becomingyourbest.com.

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[WE ARE NOW ON FACEBOOK—BECOME A FAN.](#)

Eagle photo by Bob Sumners. See more at www.shootthebeach.com

Mission:

We are dedicated to presenting inspiring stories of hope and encouragement about individuals with disabilities.

These stories of success are meant to provide support and the keys to "Becoming Your Best!"

Thank you for your stories and your support!

George M. Graham Jr.

"I Remember" - written by Luau on July 5, 2011

On Sunday, I went out for what was supposed to be a 17-18 mile run. Aside from 2 factors, it ended up being one of the best runs I've had in recent memory.

Factor One: I took a wrong turn mid-run that brought me back close to home a mile or two early. As I approached home, I realized that I was only going to have a little over 16 miles done. I thought about continuing on, but honestly, the gravity of a hot cup of coffee was simply too great.

Factor Two: I saw a young mom futzing with her little one's seat belt on her jogging stroller. She was making funny baby talk along with lines like, "Are you going to be a runner just like mommy? Maybe even a lawyer too?"

Factor one I am sure many of you can relate to, but factor two? I think that needs a little explanation.

Initially when I ran by Running Lawyer Mom, I smiled as I heard her baby voice and her baby talk. It was full of love and hope. The words came straight from her heart. Her voice, despite being in that annoying tone we parents sometimes use with little ones, was full of warmth, wrapping her baby in a caress of anticipation.

As I went through these thoughts, I continued to smile. I could feel the warmth in me.

But just as quickly as I ran by her (I was clipping along at the time at around 7:15/mile) my smile turned upside down and my joy in seeing this young mother turned to sadness.

You see, I remember those moments. I remember saying stuff like that to Brooke. Back before she could walk or talk, I remember planning her life, right down to the job she would have, the city where she would live, the number of children she would have, in short, everything. I had no idea what was just a year or two away.



We as parents know that nothing ever turns out as planned. For most of us that means our children may choose a different educational path or career path or marriage path, but we know they will get there. But for some of us, that path - that future - is much murkier than the slightly out of focus one we see for our neuro-typical children. For those of us with kids on the autism spectrum, the future is... scary.

I stopped writing this post at this point - in part because I wasn't sure where I was going with it, in part because it was time to head out for dinner before going to see the July 4th fireworks.

Going out to dinner with a child on the autism spectrum can be, um, difficult. With Brooke there are a gazillion factors that can tweak her just enough to send a meal into a tailspin. Last night, as we sat at our table, Jess and I physically winced every time a baby would cry out or a toddler would cry out for his mama or the waiting line (we were sitting right next to the entrance) got a little too close. We eyed Brooke every time, knowing that each of those factors was pushing her closer to the edge. I could see her face starting to contort. The games on my iPhone provided only a little relief.

"I Remember"...continued

But then something happened. Katie started playing Hangman with Jess and someone took notice. After a moment, Brooke decided *she* wanted to play too. Thankfully, Katie thought that was a great idea and the two of them began to play.

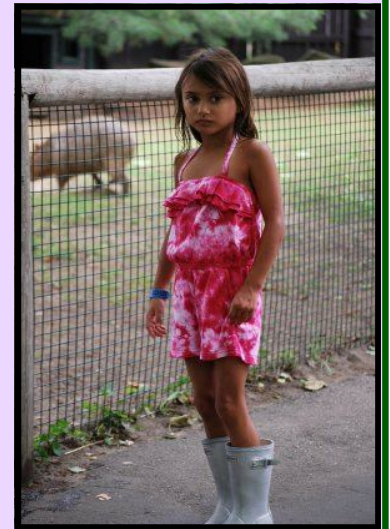
My two little girls were playing Hangman together! Laughing at the words Brooke picked (snelly and poop and Katie). They were laughing TOGETHER!

I know that for some of my friends with neuro-typical kids, this may not seem like much, they are 10 and 8 after all. But this was huge. This was the first time they had played Hangman together (in fact, as far as I know, this was the first time Brooke had played Hangman...ever!). Brooke then followed it up by working away at the word search in the children's menu. Despite a few speed bumps between dinner and the fireworks, Brooke then made it through the display in spectacular fashion, lying with Jess on the grass, enjoying the show.

As we drove home, I thought of this post and what I had written. Brooke's future is still cloudier than most. Jess and I are determined to keep her pointed in the direction of progress, but the path remains unclear. Just like any parents, we worry.

But you know what? My little girl played Hangman with her sister last night. And she enjoyed it. And she played it the way it was supposed to be played.

The path may be hard to see, but the light shining on right now just got a little brighter.



"I Remember" was reproduced in our newsletter with expressed written consent of Luau and Run Luau Run. Content and photographs are the property of Run Luau Run and may not be republished without permission of Luau and Run Luau Run. The original article can be found at: <http://runluaurun.com/>.

The article below is a follow up to "Our Story" which was shared in the January 2011 Becoming Your Best newsletter. This article can be found on the blogspot (<http://kareensjourneyhome.blogspot.com/>) entitled "Kareen's Journey Home." This article is written by Kecia Cox and is titled "New Freedom" and was posted on the blogspot on July 14th, 2011.

"New Freedom" by Kecia Cox—July 14, 2011

Freedom took on a whole new meaning this year on the 4th of July. When we landed in the USA with Mia almost a month ago, I was emotional as I saw the American flag on one of the airplanes. We were home and Mia was FREE!

So many times while we were in Ukraine, the people would say, "Oh you are so lucky to live in America. She is so lucky to get to go to America."

Being away from America made us appreciate it even more when we got back.



"New Freedom"...continued



I have always been a sucker for patriotic songs and I always cry during the "Star Spangled Banner" or when I see a flag waving, but this year was a new level of appreciation for the freedom that this holiday represents.

I have a new appreciation of what it means to be free, and a new sense of honor to sing "I Am Proud to be an American." I have a new sense of gratitude for the country we live in, the true freedom that

we enjoy, and the NEW freedom that Mia is now able to enjoy.

Mia has the freedom to LIVE, to be who she wants to be, and not be sentenced to life in an institution just because of an extra chromosome. She has the freedom to know what it means to have sisters, friends and family. She has the freedom to smile, to laugh and to explore.

Mia has the freedom to play and to just be a kid. She is free to love and to be loved. She has the freedom to eat when she wants to eat and sleep when she wants to sleep, and the freedom to feel valued and important. Finally after 4 years, this little girl knows what it really means to be free and because of her, we are learning a new meaning of freedom.



We are learning that life is full of opportunities and miracles, if we just learn to embrace life, give thanks, and be amazed. We must embrace the world around us, embrace the possibilities, give thanks, and be amazed at what life is all about. We must be amazed at all the little things, the little things that we may take for granted, but that so many like Mia, have never ever known.

Mia is embracing her new life and her new freedom, just like she was always meant to do. Just like she deserves to do.



Visit our website - <http://www.becomingyourbest.com/> and on Facebook at Becoming Your Best.

"When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another."
- Helen Keller

"God makes three requests of his children: Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have, now."
- African-American Proverb