



Life Changing: A Dad's Decision

The year 2008, started out on a high note for the Dibble family. The couple was excited to share the news that they were expecting not one, but two baby boys. However, the feeling of excitement quickly changed.

"We found out there were complications around the 16th week of pregnancy," said Nick Dibble.

The identical twins were experiencing complications from twin to twin transfusion and over the next several months the family was uncertain what would happen next.

"There just wasn't a lot of good news regarding the health of our twins," said Nick.

At just 28 weeks old, Adrian and Blaise arrived prematurely both fighting to stay alive.

"Blaise passed away a day after Christmas in 2008 after a very long and hard fight," said Nick.

Over the next couple of months, the family stayed by Adrian's side not knowing what future he would have.

"The extent and to what degree of Adrian's disability wasn't really known," added Nick.

After nearly five months in the hospital, Adrian was able to come home. As he aged, he started missing major milestones including walking. And the stress of caring for a child with a disability wasn't easy for the couple.

"I started raising Adrian on my own as a single dad shortly after his third birthday," said Nick. "At this time, Adrian was fighting seizure activity and often would not sleep for up to three to four days at a time."

At first, the schedule for Nick was overwhelming. He was working at the Mayo Clinic, finishing his bachelors degree and attending to Adrian's needs. However, Nick knew Adrian needed him.

"None of us can control what life throws at us, but what we can control is how we handle and react to those things," explained Nick. "My only goal was to be the best dad to him that I possibly could be."

That goal has always remained at the top of Nick's list, and today Adrian is seven years old and one of the happiest boys you will ever meet in PossAbilities Youth Rec program.

"The Youth Rec program is wonderful," said Nick. "It gives Adrian an opportunity to experience activities with individuals at his same ability level while being with staff who are caring and compassionate."

Throughout the week at PossAbilities, Adrian can be spotted swimming in the Y pool and jumping on the trampoline at JETS Gymnastics. He is also a huge football fan and can be found during a Minnesota Gopher's home game near the end zone.

"We can be bitter and mad at what life throws at us or we can move forward and make ourselves better through the adversity each of us face," said Nick. "The opportunity to know and raise my son has forever changed me."

Nick's determination to fulfill his son's life has made a permanent impression on Adrian as well because he is always full of smiles and giggles when he is at PossAbilities.



Adrian and his baby brother Charlie



Born in the Kitchen

Catalina, a PossAbilities participant, has a passion for food. A passion that started at the age of ten, downtown at Victoria Ristorante.

“My dad took me to help him cut up stuff,” said Catalina. “He used to work there. He told me to always concentrate on the knife.”

It was in Victoria’s kitchen that Catalina learned to love food. Her main task was to help with the prep work by cutting up the mushrooms and the tomatoes.

“Dad taught me right and wrong,” laughed Catalina.

It was a learning experience that is now paying off because Catalina just landed a job in the kitchen at IBM.

“I was excited when I found out,” said Catalina. “I was jumping in my house.”

“I don’t think she could quit smiling for days,” said Kris Henning, Employment Consultant and Job Developer, PossAbilities. “She is still smiling.”

In less than a month on the job, Catalina has mastered cooking breakfast and running the fryer. Her manager Randy Schroeder jokes that it’s just a matter of time before she will be running the place.

“Catalina is doing a great job,” said Randy, Food Service Director. “In my more than 20 years of restaurant experience, my experience working with people with disabilities is they are a joy to work with and they appreciate the job. That’s what we want with an employee.”

Catalina definitely fits the description.

“It’s a good job,” smiled Catalina. “I love it.”

The joy of the kitchen crew and the smell of the delicious food is something Catalina hopes to have as a part of her life for years to come. Someday she would love to live in Italy or Spain and cook pasta and pizza. Until then, she is enjoying her role right here in our community, at IBM.



“It’s important that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to society,” said Randy. “And I appreciate companies like PossAbilities that allow this to happen.”



**Do you want to receive PossAbilities Newsletters?
Signup at www.PossAbilities.org**

A New Approach to Care

During an annual infant checkup, Larry and Janet Johnson were surprised to learn their son Steve, a PossAbilities participant, would not develop mentally past one year old.

“This information came as a big surprise because no one had mentioned a problem before this,” said Janet. “The physician told us to place him in an institution right away for it would be a problem for our other child.”

In the late 1960’s, there was limited support services in Olmsted County for children with disabilities. The only place recommended for Steve, who was two years old at the time, was a home near the Twin Cities.

“Over time the home became overcrowded and understaffed,” said Janet. “They were closed down.”

The Johnsons moved Steve into the Rochester State Hospital but knew they wanted to provide a better home setting for Steve.

In the early 1970s, the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC), Director and Activist, Ann Ferguson, rounded up Rochester family members with children with disabilities and several prominent community members and leaders to create a home like setting for people with disabilities.

“We planned what we wanted for our children,” explained Janet. “A home like setting, visiting at anytime, respite care available and open communication with staff and directors.”

In order to build a home, not like a hospital but to provide for people with serious mental and physical disabilities, the group would need support from the community and money.

“We as a community needed to bring our children back to their community; and also so they could receive good care,” said Janet.

Together, they achieved getting legislation passed so Olmsted County could underwrite revenue bonds to build what would become the Hiawatha Children’s Home. After years of discussions, advocating, and fundraising, Hiawatha Children's Home opened its doors in July of 1976.

“What a great day that was for my son and all the others to come,” said Janet.

The Children’s Home was licensed for people with disabilities up to 21 years old. There was also a need in the community for an adult home so in 1982, the group opened the first Adult Home in Rochester.



“Our son, Steve, has been a resident at Hiawatha Homes for 40 years and he couldn’t have a better place to call home,” said Janet. “Our son Kurt also lived at Hiawatha for two years before he passed away in 1979.”

Our community is vibrant, inclusive and advocates for all of its members and because of that, today Hiawatha Homes has 22 residential homes in Rochester, Byron and Oronoco. About 40 of PossAbilities Participants currently live at those homes.



The first 12 people to live at Hiawatha when it opened. Ten of these people attend PossAbilities today.

Photo Courtesy: Hiawatha Homes

What else have we been up to?

We are on the Web
www.PossAbilities.org



Congrats to Kenda for 25-years at PossAbilities!

PossAbilities is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation committed to serving children and adults with disabilities through individualized, community based programs. We help people find and keep jobs, become engaged members of the community, contribute through volunteerism, and experience integrated social and recreational opportunities.