

## A Village

During the weeks following newborn Logan's diagnosis of Down syndrome Collin and I discussed our plan of attack. How were we going to raise our son to reach his fullest potential?

Collin and I are practical, goal oriented, conflict avoiding 'second borns'. To this day we do not really argue. We look at the problem, the facts, and the possible solutions. We agree on a course of action and never look back. We have always been this way. Even four years prior to Logan's arrive. as ignorant 24-year-old newly weds, we fantasized about how we would raise our children. We determined our ultimate goal to be; raise our children to be contributing members of their community.

It only took a brief exchange to between us to confirm that despite Logan's unlikely diagnosis, and all the unknowns that came along with it, our goal remained the same. Our children will become contributing members of their community. We simply had to expand the spectrum of what 'contributing to his community' might look like.

The next step was, 'how do we do this?'. I, more then Collin, have a very structured mind. I like to commit to a goal and devise a plan to increase the likelihood of achieving success. There will be deviations from the plan, but I find it comforting to create an 'over view'.

We chuckled at the expectancy that one day, way in the future, infant Logan would grown to be a teenager embarrassed by his parents, seeking independence. We deduced that the only way for us to feel comfortable extending Logan the independence he would one day grow to desire would be to 'train our community'.

In order to provide Logan lifelong protection, we would have to share him. Those who know Collin and I personally can appreciate what a stretch this social involvement is from our preferred 'hermit-like' existence.

If we wanted our community to know Logan, they had to first meet Logan. We would need every neighbour, Tim Horton's team member, student, police officer, Special Olympian and city worker have a personal interaction with him. So that they could recognize him in a crowd and feel responsible for his well being. And to protect him they would step over two cultural phenomenons.

The first is that our Canadian culture is, to a fault, polite. We resist aiding strangers out of fear of causing hurt, offense or embarrassment. The second is, diffusion of responsibility. This is to say that the more people who are present at an event, the less likely that ANYONE is to intervene because each witness wrongfully assumes that someone else will act. The reverse then is, that if only one person is present at an event, they are almost certain to intervene as it is obvious that no one else will.

It is the combination of these two certainties, coupled with my personal experience, that has me believe that; the act of helping is very easy, it is the decision to act that is difficult.

Knowing all this is what defined our challenge; We need our community to know, love and feel such a responsibility for our son that when they are driving home from work

and they see Logan about to get into a car, they will act. Even if they are tired, late, almost out of gas and just wanting to be home for supper they will hush the inner voice urging them to 'not make a scene' or to accept the possibility, 'I'm sure someone else checked that he knows that person'. But to instead listens to the other voice, the quieter, easily dismissed voice that says, 'That's not Morgan's car', 'Logan usually walks', 'It will only take a second'. That voice that has you flick on your hazards, get out of your car and say, 'Hi Logan, my name is Steve. We sit next to you and your mom at the Whaler's games. Do you know this person'?

The first half of this scenario is one that all parents fear regardless of your child's level of vulnerability. An ill meaning person praying on your child. The outcome of this scenario is what Collin and I are making a conscious effort to make a 'the norm'. To create a community that intervenes even if it is rude, inconvenient or likely that someone else as already acted. We must build a community that takes care of one another because that is what our son will need to become an independent, contributing member of his community.

Eight years ago, Collin and I set out on along term assignment that may or may not ever pay off. We decided to get Logan out in the community as much as possible. We wanted our community, family, friends, and coworkers to meet Logan as a cute little baby and fall in love with him. We wanted people to ask about him, comment on his development, and form a relationship with him.

Collin and I aimed to have our community look for Logan at hockey games, in the park and at Day Care. We needed our community to recognize, love and feel a responsibility for our son so that one day Logan can say, 'Mom, I am going to the Y', and I can say, 'have fun', because we know that where ever Logan goes in our quaint community we know he is not alone.