



First Person: MEREDITH

In Her Own Words

What can you tell us about yourself and your family?

I am Meredith, age 22, and I live with my parents in Alabama. I have a younger brother named Zach. One of my favorite childhood memories is dressing up at Halloween. Zach was Captain Hook, and I was Peter Pan, and another time he was a cowboy and I was an Indian. We also had fun at Christmas, which is my favorite holiday to celebrate. My family has many traditions I enjoy. One is getting an ornament each year to remind us of our interests, like my Barbie Doll collection, and my two former dogs, Scamper and Misha.

What do you like to do in your free time?

For fun, I go out with my boyfriend, Matthew, or my girlfriends. Matthew and I usually go out to dinner and a movie. We take turns having dinner at each other's house, and we love watching the Three Stooges videos. I'm also involved with People First, a self-advocacy group for people with disabilities. I am the chaplain and open the meeting with words of encouragement about having a positive attitude. At church I help out in the fourth-grade Religious Education classroom. I also volunteer for the North Shelby County Library and Alabama Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

What can you tell us about your experience at school?

I graduated from Oak Mountain High School. During high school, I was nominated for the Homecoming Court, and was voted Best Choral Student. I really enjoyed high school because it had a great atmosphere and I had many friends. My favorite subjects were government, choir, and environmental science. I also liked our pep rallies and football games. My least favorite subject was math. My best high school memory is getting to be in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. We walked three miles singing and dancing in New York City, where it was very cold. Some of the challenges were trying to be smart and independent. While in high school I joined the Special Olympics Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, and I still compete today. I also am on a Special Olympics bowling team.

What can you tell us about your work background?

During my senior year, I started to get work experience. I got to work at a video store, a card shop, a restaurant, and Jefferson State Community College. My first real job was at a department store, where I helped organize and fold clothes. I don't have a job right now, but I'm working with my job coach to find one. I'd like to work in an office or clothing store.

What do you see yourself doing in the future?

My dream for the future is to have a job, live in my own place, and maybe one day get married. My grandmother, who was very sweet, is my role model. She was a very strong woman and never complained even though she had diabetes for over fifty years. She always encouraged me to be healthy and take care of myself.

What is one thing you want people to remember about you?

I would like people to know that I love my life.



When our daughter, Meredith, was born with Down syndrome, we faced numerous medical, social, and educational challenges. We had no way of knowing that very soon we would become partners with doctors; speech, physical, and occupational therapists; early interventionists; teachers; job coaches; and other advocates who value the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities. This partnership has created lasting bonds of friendship, changed attitudes, strengthened inclusive educational practices, and allowed Meredith to achieve many goals.

Meredith's literary abilities have far exceeded our earliest expectations. She is an excellent reader with incredible spelling and comprehension skills. Her passion for learning and wanting to educate herself is remarkable. Meredith is a delightful, self-confident young woman with a sense of humor; knows no prejudice; and loves unconditionally. Meredith is an extraordinary person trying to live an ordinary life, and we are blessed to be her parents.