

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Keizer woman connects mothers of kids with Down Syndrome

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Ever since TiAnna Wright gave birth to Andrew, her 18-month old son with Down syndrome, she has been involved with a number of groups for parents with children that have Down syndrome.

But earlier this year, Wright decided that she wanted to step out of her comfort zone and create a group of her own.

"I have been feeling like I needed to do this for a while," Wright said.

Wright recently created a local moms group in the Salem-Keizer area for mothers who have a child with Down syndrome.

The initial plan was to have monthly walks or coffee house hangouts to share what it's like to be a mother of a child with Down syndrome. But when the spread of COVID-19 hit in March, Wright initially felt like she needed to put everything on hold.

However, thanks to Zoom — a video service that has become increasingly popular for those in quarantine — Wright and the other mothers in the group were still able to meet up over the computer.

"I was missing people, it was so great that will still got to do it virtually," Wright said.

Having comradery and fellowship with other moms with children who have Down syndrome has been a blessing to Wright for a litany of different reasons.

For instance, Wright loves being able to celebrate with mothers when one of the children take a step forward in their development, like when one of the kids started to walk

with the assistance of a roller, or when another child begins to eat fruits and vegetables.

To many, these achievements might not seem like a big deal, but to Wright, as well as other parents of children with Down syndrome, they are a source of joy.

"Certain things are a really big deal to our kids, so it has been really fun to celebrate and cheer with mommas when their kids accomplish something new," Wright said. "There are plenty of people that are super caring and understanding with Andrew. But with other mothers who are going through the exact same stuff as I am, they just get me."

Being Andrew's mother has taught Wright a lot about Down syndrome, but it has also taught her how she can better support those who are disenfranchised.

"Andrew has really opened my eyes to a lot of things in this world, because this world is not catered to him," Wright said. "It made me understand privilege and the inequality people face in this world."

One of the moms that connected with Wright was Rachel Prescott, the mother of twin girls that have Down syndrome. Prescott has a blog called doublingdownmom.com where she writes about how she and her family navigate how to parent and advocate for her two daughters with Down syndrome.

Prescott, who has more than 90,000 followers on Instagram, talked about how important it is for families that have children with Down syndrome to seek out friendships and relationships with people who face similar challenges.



TiAnna and Andrew Wright

"When you're a mom that receives a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome, it's easy to be overcome by fear. A lot of information on children with Down syndrome is outdated and incorrect, so to be able to go to have community with real mothers who know what you're going through, that is a game-changer," Prescott said. "There is such a beauty in it, and that's really encouraging."

Wright says that the mom's group will continue to chat via Zoom until the COVID-19 pandemic comes to an end. She hopes to plan a mom's night out, as well as schedule play dates with entire families.

"You need that person-to-person contact. It's important to connect and have fellowship. Without it, the journey can get a little lonely," Wright said. "It's been pretty special how it all worked out."

The mom's group is open for new members. To join, reach out to Wright on Facebook or Instagram.

'Angel' donor delivers cause to celebrate

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

David Dowell was only expressing his frustration when he posted on a Keizer Facebook group that his son, Zachary, would have to forego cake and candles on his fifth birthday. He ended up calling down an angel.

"What I was trying to do was express the frustration of all the parents who are going through this and the sacrifices the kids were having to make," said Dowell. "I wasn't really expecting anything to come of it."

Dowell is having to take extra precaution because he suffered a heart attack almost a year ago. Doctors installed a pacemaker to help moderate his heart rate, but his body hasn't acclimated well to the addition.

The health problems cost him his job as a car salesman and then his family lost the home they were renting from his employer in St. Helens. Dowell's brother offered him a home in Keizer as long as the family paid the associated bills.

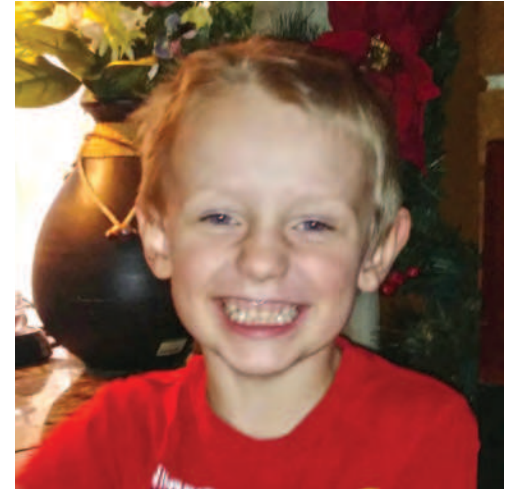
As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with his

health issues, he and his family are limiting their exposure as much as possible. The family planned to forego some of the festivities typically associated with a birthday for Zachary, but Keizerite Megan Ford saw Dowell's post on the Keizer Community Bulletin Board and wasn't going to let that happen.

"I have a son who just turned 5 on March 1, right before all the crazy happened. When I read that his 5-year-old wouldn't even get a cake it tugged at my heart," Ford said.

Ford was at the store buying a cake, candles and ice cream in no time.

Dowell wanted to pay Ford for the kindness of the gesture and messaged her about leaving money in a folder on the front porch or donating to a charity.



Submitted

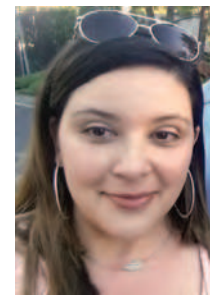
Zachary Dowell didn't have to skip cake and candles on his fifth birthday thanks to the kindness of strangers.

But, when he opened the front door, the delivery had already been made.

"I couldn't imagine not being able to at least give my child a cake to celebrate. I was extremely happy to be able to help bring some joy during this time of uncertainty," Ford said.

Dowell said the outcome was beyond anything he might have expected.

"I felt like we've been blessed. We've been through hard times recently, but to have someone reach out and make sure our son had a birthday party ... she was literally an angel sent to us," Dowell said.



Megan Ford

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