

(Matthew's Story)

Before Matthew, I was living my life in a bubble, nothing bad had ever really happened to me. Then worst thing that could happen in a delivery room did ... our son Matthew was born with major problems. I didn't want to ask the question why but what's next. The first person who told us what to do was Maureen Rinehimer. She is the catalyst towards Matthew's continued recovery process. Mrs. Rinehimer is a physical therapist who has worked with Matthew since day 1 of life. She is also the reason we joined the Lauren's Hope Foundation.

I can still remember the very first event we were invited to attend. It was the annual Breakfast with Santa. Matthew had just turned one year old and it was the first fun social outing we had as a family. What a magical time we had everyone in the network was so friendly and generous. The feeling of hope was everywhere. Serenity overcame me as a new mother that because of this organization we would make friends and not be alone. This sense of camaraderie made me feel that everything was all right. A quote I got from the Lauren's Hope website reminds me to keep the hope alive. "Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are." Bertolt Brecht.

Matthew undergoes hours of physical, occupational, and speech therapies weekly. Hippo Therapy has considerably improved Matthew's balance. The three dimensional movement of the horse has helped him function better on all levels. Equilibrium is the facility where we go for equestrian therapy for the past six years. Lauren's Hope is the reason we were introduced to this innovative therapy. When Matthew is on the horse the handicap is not as prominent and we feel exhilaration.

Lauren's Hope has built up our family's self-esteem and confidence. It helps us on our quest for Matthew's full inclusion into our community, sports, education and one day workforce. Because of those on the Lauren's Hope Foundation and those who fought before us to get acceptance and understanding our struggles are less.

This organization has helped me to confirm that anything is possible if you are willing to be creative. We have made so many friends because of Lauren's Hope. Other parents have given us tips on parenting issues, where to buy medical equipment and how to relax. The demands of caring taking are pervasive. A special needs parent does not breathe, act, or move without first considering that special child who will remain with them forever. You always have to be on. The mother's day manicure event that Lauren's Hope founds is an annual event for parents to relax.

I am so proud to be Matthew's mother and have such a wonderful patient husband to raise him with. Faith helped us to understand why this happened to our son but the help of the Lauren's Hope Foundation made us believe everything will be okay. Matthew continues to bring light to those around him. He is a progressive miracle, and I know God chose to heal him little by little instead of all at once. Matthew shows us the fight of the down trodden. We were truly blessed to be past honorary chairs. I cannot think of an organization more devoted to inspiring these special families reach their greatest potentials.

Biographies

Sharon C. is from the Wyoming Valley. She has taught in the public school system for 13 years all of those years have been with the Pocono Mountain School District. Tremendous family support has enabled the job to continue. Besides teaching, cooking is something she enjoys and during the summer months she volunteers at Saint Vincent De Pauls soup kitchen in Wilkes-Barre Pa. Matthew, Michael and mommy love to be outside and play.

Mark is from New York and went to medical school on Long Island. He did his residency training with The Leigh Valley Health Network. Mark has been a full time Emergency Room physician at the Geisinger, CMC hospital since 2009. In his spare time Mark studies tactical medicine and is working on a fellowship in that particular area of expertise.

Matthew is 6 years old and loves to practice the accordion. He even performed with John Stanky and the coalminers on the Bloomsburg Fair bandstand. Swimming and Horseback riding are two of his favorite sports. Matthew can walk independently, jump and climb. He can read some words and write his name. He enjoys coloring and visiting Disney World. I dream came true this year enrolling him into my old catholic school. A caregiver assists him but he is mainstreamed. Faith is believing in what you can not see at the time. We were promised nothing when he was born and had wires all over his body in the NICU. Every day he pushes his limits to succeed and it is a real inspiration and a gift to watch. Matthew is a great big brother to Michael who joined our family last year.