

Ashalon

I was 14 years old when my parents decided to adopt a baby. They brought home the cutest, happiest little baby boy you’ve ever seen. He fit so well into our family since he had the same heritage (I’m half Caucasian and half Native American). But even in the beginning there was something different about him in that his body was always tense. It took until he was 2 ½ years old before he got diagnosed with FASD. This was devastating for my parents. They said it was almost like a death, like they were losing the child they thought they had because suddenly the high hopes they had for his future were changed, and his future was unknown.

Since research on FASD is relatively new, there is really no way to know what his future will hold. As he’s grown up (he’s now a teenager) they’ve learned to stop worrying about the future so much and just take it one day at a time and enjoy each moment now. And they definitely would not ever trade the experiences they’ve had—it’s been absolutely worth it to them, and to all of us, to have him in our family.

When I was crowned Mrs. Utah/America earlier this year I decided to make my platform be “bringing HOPE to parents of special needs children.”

(H = health and nutrition;
O = organizations;
P = programs; and
E = education.)

In my research I’ve found that 1/6 of all children in the world have some sort of special need. We need to put money there. If we don’t, they’ll be a bigger drain on society. We need to make people aware of the problems these children and their families face. We need to offer programs and support groups for the families. And even though there will still be lots of unknowns, a little HOPE can go a long way.

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