

It takes a village to raise a child. When a child is born, the village—siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends— shows up. When an extraordinary (EXTRA-ordinary) child is born, even more people show up in the village— people that parents never knew they would need like medical specialists, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech therapists.

Our son, Jayden, was diagnosed with CFC Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. It occurs 1 in 1 million. Cause unknown. In Jayden's case, it created a brain abnormality, heart abnormalities, GI issues, feeding issues, and global developmental delays. During his first three years of life, the local early intervention program provided intensive therapy. When he turned three, we then graduated from early intervention to the local CIU. The CIU therapy services then brought us to Easter Seals.

As any mom would tell you, a child starting school is nerve-wracking. A child with different abilities starting school is even MORE nerve-wracking. On Jayden's first day of school, as we walked through the front doors, the following sign greeted us:

When you
Enter this
Loving school
Consider yourself
One of the special
Members of an
Extraordinary family

The sign melted this momma's heart. It is EXACTLY what any parent— typical or otherwise— would want for their child. I have found this statement to be true at Easter Seals. The staff have created a warm, inviting school where every little person is treasured. The teachers teach typical students what understanding and acceptance looks like for non-typical peers. Jayden has thrived here. He LOVES coming to school. He has soaked up all the new learning opportunities. He has enjoyed interacting with his peers in his own classroom as well as making friends in other classrooms. Jayden works hard in meeting the challenges presented by the therapists. Above all though, he has become an integral part of this school. His teachers and therapists share funny stories about him, has helped him when needed, has cheered and encouraged— all things that any family would do for one of their members.

It takes a family. It takes a village. To raise a child.

With Much Gratitude,
Melody Crist