

The 1,400 children and adults with developmental disabilities of Champaign, Ford, Piatt, and Iroquois counties greatly benefit from your gift to the 2010 Tree of Hope Campaign. Each time a bulb is lit, we are able to provide the resources and services vital to a brighter future for them and their families.

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by making your contribution today.
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or use the enclosed remittance envelope.**



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2010 Tree of Hope Campaign

www.dsc-illinois.org

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Developmental Services Center

Tree of Hope Campaign

“To enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities by providing services and supports which enable them to live, work, learn and participate in their communities.”



2010



Beth Rempe, Theo Malekin, and Hazel Rempe-Malekin



Hazel Rempe-Malekin

Hazel is three years old, gregarious, curious and mischievous. She loves looking at books and listening to music, especially songs and stories about animals. She has recently discovered the joys of the playground slide, and we're in trouble if we pass one without trying it out! Her smile is contagious and her enthusiasm for life infectious. Hazel is our precious daughter who also happens to live with Down syndrome.

Hazel's story began in Sweden in 2007, where we moved shortly before she was born, eagerly anticipating her arrival and preparing for our first child. Blood tests confirmed there was a slightly higher probability of Down syndrome, but there were so many concerns and hopes involved in expecting a baby, we did not dwell on this. The real shock came during a routine scan at seven months during our pregnancy, when the doctor turned off the ultrasound and bluntly said, "This baby is too small. It must come out. It's good that you came today and not tomorrow." This news seemed to open an abyss beneath us and we began wondering, "What was wrong with our child? Will she survive this?"

Hazel was born the following morning by emergency caesarean. The first thing both of us noticed was her long pink tongue. The second was how tiny and fragile she was, weighing in at only 2 pounds, 12 ounces. But to us she was beautiful. Perfect.

The doctors took a blood sample to test for Down syndrome, and we had known for some time that this diagnosis was possible. Nevertheless, the confirmation a few days later was a shock. Yet, it was in some ways a relief because we had been concerned that something more serious could be wrong, perhaps something fatal. We learned Hazel's prematurity was unusual, as she only weighed about half the weight of a typical premature infant at seven months of development. As we were being told all these medical facts about our new daughter, our main focus was taking turns every day holding our tiny girl against our chests, as skin-to-skin contact is essential for a premature baby. We spent these quiet hours beginning to get to know our daughter. We realized that neither size nor diagnosis mattered – she was perfect, and this was just the Hazel version of perfect. We were proud,

smitten parents and took photo after photo of our beautiful girl. The love and care she received were working and after a month she had gained enough weight to come home with us. Then began the everyday business of caring for an infant - exhausting but rewarding. We began to read all we could on Down syndrome and how we could best help our daughter thrive.

In 2009, Beth's dad became seriously ill and we decided to move back to Champaign, Beth's hometown, to spend what time we could with her dad and to offer support to her mom. During these difficult times, we also had to be sure that Hazel could continue to receive early intervention that was critical for her development. Although we never had reason to know much about DSC previously, we knew it was located in Champaign County, and hoped they could continue to help the three of us.

After arriving in C-U, Hazel became seriously ill with pneumonia and had to spend a month in the hospital, some of the time on a special ventilator which required her to be immobilized with paralytic drugs. As you can imagine, this was an emotionally difficult time for our family, and was a considerable setback to Hazel's development, because her muscles were severely weakened and it took her an additional month to recover her strength. DSC's Early Intervention Program following her illness was crucial to encourage her continued development. Many of Hazel's essential therapies were provided through DSC and we wonder today what we would have done if this help had not been available. We are forever grateful to DSC for being there for us and for our family.

Hazel's early intervention at DSC included physical therapy, developmental therapy and her weekly playgroup, which allowed her to interact with peers and gave us the chance to meet parents who understood our worries and concerns and helped celebrate Hazel's milestones! These services, as well as special equipment provided through DSC including her walker, adjustable bench, developmental toys, and adapted tableware have helped Hazel make great progress. It has been so exciting to watch her grow, investigate, learn and discover the world around her.



Hazel is a wonderful child – bright, funny, affectionate, and cheerful. We feel so privileged to be her parents. Thinking about her future, we want her to have a happy, meaningful life with good friends and unlimited opportunities. We take great comfort in the vital community services the DSC provides to children and adults with developmental disabilities and as state and federal funding for people with disabilities becomes more and more vulnerable, it is vital that our community supports DSC.

Please help Hazel light the way and make your Tree of Hope donation today!

The Rempe Malekin Family

What is DSC?

Developmental Services Center is a non-profit organization serving children and adults with developmental disabilities in Champaign, Ford, Piatt, and Iroquois counties. Since 1972, DSC's mission has been "To enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities by providing services and supports which enable them to live, work, learn and participate in their communities." DSC serves approximately 1,400 children and adults on an annual basis through five different programs: Family Development Center, Residential Services, Employment and Job Placement Services, Developmental Training, and Case Management/Family Support Services.

What your gift does...

When you give to DSC's Tree of Hope, you are giving individuals opportunities and experiences they would not have without your support. These opportunities range from a child receiving early intervention services, high school transition, maintaining a job in the community, living independently, or attending a day program that provides necessary therapy. Your gift allows us to continue providing vital services and supports that offers individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to live the most independent life possible.

Between now and January 31st, every gift given to the Tree of Hope lights another bulb on our tree, located at Prospect Avenue and Marketview Drive in Champaign. Each lit bulb represents \$50 in donations symbolizing the services and supports we are able to provide. Watch the tree light up between now and January 31st; as it gets brighter, so does the future of individuals receiving DSC services.

Please support DSC's efforts. Enclosed is a remittance envelope for your convenience or **give online at www.dsc-illinois.org**. If you have questions, or would like more information about the Tree of Hope or DSC, please contact Dale Morrissey, Chief Executive Officer, at 217-356-9176.

Help us give
Opportunities to
People with developmental disabilities
Everyday

Thank You

