

Alana Patricia Drablos

Alana Patricia Drablos is my first born 23 year-old daughter. I was 26 and my husband, Scott, was 29 on February 8, 1985, when she arrived six weeks early weighing 4 pounds, 11 ounces. We learned she had a heart defect when she was two days old, and a group of doctors told us she had Down syndrome four days later when the definitive test results were in hand. My delivery was a Caesarian because Alana was breech and premature. She actually did very well and breathed on her own from birth, but needed to stay in the hospital for 16 days to establish a pattern of gaining weight.

Our doctors were well intentioned, but poorly informed in many ways. The lead neonatologist assured us that Alana would walk and run and play, for heaven's sake! Granted this was more than 20 years ago and times have changed, but it is almost silly to think of it given what Alana has accomplished and all that she can and will do in the future. Our shining star at the time was Alana's pediatric cardiologist, Damaris Wright, who is passionately attached to her patients with Down syndrome and a high energy super positive happy individual. Dr. Wright went through all of Alana's heart issues with us including successful surgery at 10 months.

Scott and I were referred to the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas. We met other families with children with Down syndrome. I read everything I could find that seemed relevant trying to understand what it really meant to have Down syndrome. Alana was a perfect baby, easy going and very attached to her dad. She started home based therapy at six weeks. I became an advocate for full inclusion of people with Down syndrome in all communities, including the public schools. I became a board member of the Guild. Our family grew. Her sister Katie was born, then her brother, Thomas, and finally, her second sister, Maeve. All four children attended Montessori school in Dallas and then public school in Fairview, where we had moved when Alana was entering fourth grade.

Alana accomplished almost all the typical childhood milestones, just at a slower pace and in her own way. In grade school she was in an Indian Princess tribe, took dance and gymnastics lessons, played the piano, was in a Girl Scout troop, played basketball on a team Scott coached, sang in the church children's choir, and was fully included in typical classes at Lovejoy elementary.

Middle school and high school in Allen brought new challenges and enriching experiences. Alana managed girls basketball teams, was a staff photographer for the

