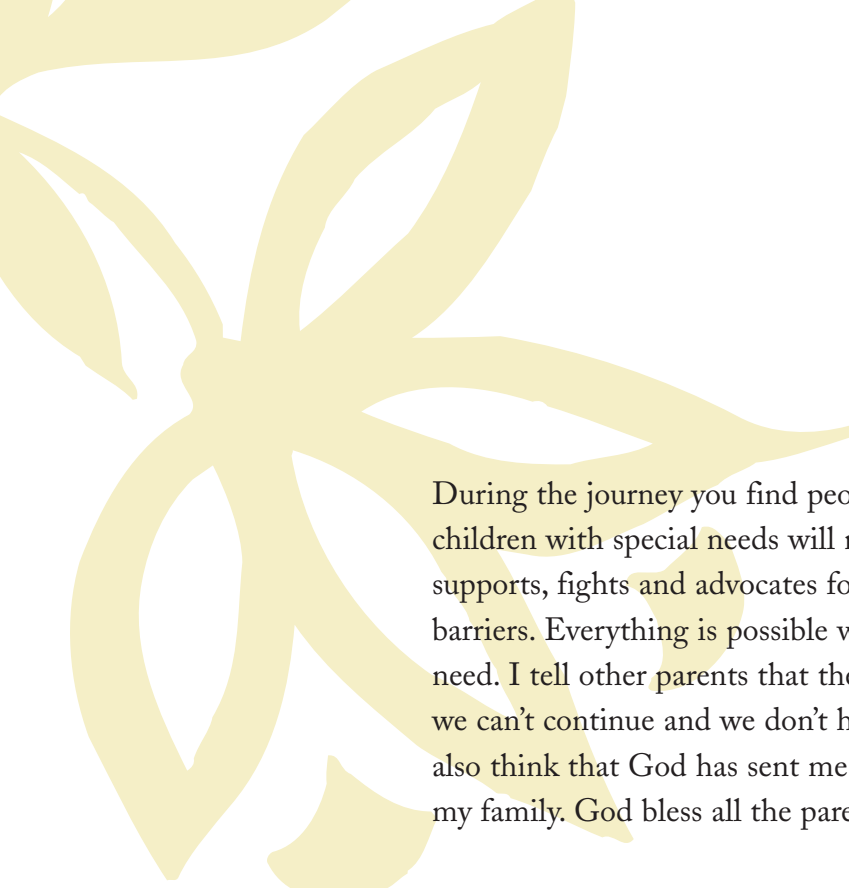


My Life with Eric

I AM A MOM WHO HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH FOUR BOYS. ERIC IS the youngest of my sons and was born with special health care needs. My life took a hard turn the moment Eric was born. I didn't think I was going to take the pain. God doesn't give you more than what you can handle. During this time, I believed I was the one to blame for what he was going through. When I met other parents that had children with special health care needs, I realized that I was not the only one and there were other parents in the same situation. Of course, each child is different, and little by little I understood that I was not to blame; sometimes things happen and we don't know why.

When Eric was born, doctors realized that he didn't have pulse in his legs and his blood was not flowing properly. That's why he needed an emergency heart surgery. They told me that his aorta was too narrow and the blood was unable to reach his legs. As results of testing, the doctors found that he had different special needs including: microcephaly, hypotonia and developmental delays. It has been a long, hard process. Since his birth, Eric has being a very strong little guy, and he still is.

Before Eric was released from the hospital, I had to learn many things, taking care of him and being his nurse. I had to stop working in order to care for him. During the surgery, his vocal cords and trachea got damaged, so he didn't breath by himself, needed oxygen and was feed through his nose. Once Eric was released from the hospital, he received all kind of therapies, such as physical, occupational and speech and language therapies. Sometimes is very hard to find services and supports when your child needs them. Sometimes because of the language barriers, sometimes because you don't know what to do, you feel overwhelmed. I was lucky I found people that helped Eric and me.



During the journey you find people or even sometimes doctors that think that children with special needs will not be able to be or do anything. When the family supports, fights and advocates for them, the children make progress and there are not barriers. Everything is possible with love and finding the needed services that they need. I tell other parents that they shouldn't give up, sometimes we feel defeated, that we can't continue and we don't have more strength. We need to continue fighting. I also think that God has sent me Eric for a purpose. He is beautiful gift to me and my family. God bless all the parents that help their children and don't give up.

I started advocating for Eric when he started in the Early Intervention System of the District of Columbia. After 3 years of age he went to the DC Public Schools. It was very difficult for me. I found that the system was difficult to navigate. I searched for help and found it through an agency, Advocacy for Justice (AJE). They helped me very much and I started working for them. For me it has been a very nice experience. I learned a lot and through them I have been able to help other parents to fight and advocate for their children. I tell parents that language is neither an obstacle nor a barrier. I tell parents not to give up, you are not alone. Together we can fight, ask, and look for information and support.

I have been blessed with Eric. He is ten years old now; he is a very brave little angel. He is sweet, loving and enjoys music a lot. God bless you Eric.

His Mom