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Family & Relationships

Gifts 2: How People with Down Syndrome Enrich Our Lives
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Kathryn Lynard Soper, editor
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This sequel to the award-winning *Gifts: Mothers Reflect on How Children with Down Syndrome Enrich Their Lives* offers comfort, hope, and inspiration to families and the wider community in a way that no scholarly document ever could; it can also help to prepare the minds and hearts of expectant parents to receive their new Down syndrome child with love and joy.

These eloquent essays are colorful, heartwarming, and often humorous stories of people who faced the diagnosis of Down syndrome and learned to find in it a cause for celebration rather than for grief and despair; that this is possible might at first come as a surprise to readers, just as it did for many of the contributors. Their writings, however, are filled with words like "light," "love," and "pride," and declarations that they have become better people because of the example of a person with Down syndrome. They speak of having learned to celebrate the ordinary, of having awakened to the truth that everyday life is a gift, and they demonstrate that a diagnosis of Down syndrome, while challenging, no longer denies an individual the ability to live a rich and meaningful life.

The Special Olympics motto: "Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt," seems to be the personal motto of many with Down syndrome, leading those who know them to redefine courage. Often born with heart defects that require surgery, and faced with challenges in learning the skills required for common activities, people with Down syndrome continue to surprise those who know them with their perseverance, courage, acceptance, friendship, and amazing ability to find joy in the simple things of life.

Connie Szarek, a grandmother and contributor of an essay, expressed what members of many other families touched by Down syndrome came to see; she said that her granddaughter, Rylie, was "that perfect baby we were waiting for; I just didn't know it thenÂ…But I do now."

Kathryn Lynard Soper is the mother of seven children; her youngest has Down

syndrome. She is the author of the memoir *The Year My Son and I Were Born* and editor of the two anthologies in the *Gifts* series and of *The Mother in Me*. She is president of the nonprofit Segullah Group and editor-in-chief of *Segullah*, a literary journal by and for Latter-day Saints (Mormon) women.

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