



with him and keep the beat for him. On his own, he will surely fall out of step from the rest of the world. It is so easy for him to become lost in the music of life. I'm happy to be here for John, to help him catch the beat again when he loses it, to accompany him through a life that can bring him joy and success that he might not realize by playing solo.

But what about the other 5,000 children born each year with FAS? What about the 50,000 others born each year with alcohol related birth defects? They are the ones who may appear to be normal physically and intellectually, but who nevertheless have suffered from prenatal exposure to alcohol with similar dysfunction of the central nervous system. These are the kids who are hyperactive, have attention deficit disorder, don't learn from the consequences of their actions, who are too impulsive to think before they act, who are just as frustrated with their inability to control their behavior as everyone else around them. Who is going to help them find the beat? Who is going to provide them with the accompaniment they need to get through life?

It feels good to help guide John through the challenges he faces in life. But somehow, that's not enough. After all, FAS is preventable - 100% preventable. And it's the leading cause of mental retardation in our country. Something is wrong here. Research has shown that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. The only sure way to prevent damage is to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy. In the spirit of solidarity, I have chosen not to drink, to support others who have chosen not to drink, to make it easier for others, maybe a pregnant woman, to choose not to drink. In the spirit of education, I have chosen to speak out about FAS and alcohol related birth defects, in the hope that an increase in awareness today might promote an increase in the wellness of our community tomorrow. After all, I believe that all children deserve to have a chance at a happy and healthy life.

*Teresa is a single mom working part-time as Coordinator of the FAS Community Resource Center. She is presently working on legislation in Arizona to change eligibility criteria for persons with neurological disabilities.*