



One Family's "Roller Coaster Ride"

by Laura Broyles, Parent

Change as we all know is constant" in our lives. Our family (James, Laura, Lawton, and Megan Broyles) has changed in many ways over the years, but the most life altering change, thus far, occurred on December 2, 2001. Megan, our five-month old daughter, began having seizures. These seizures were multiple and coming fairly often. We were quickly admitted to the Children's Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. It was there that our "roller coaster ride" began. Megan was diagnosed with a birth defect known as a Migrational Anomaly on the right frontal lobe of the brain. This diagnosis, in turn, caused diagnoses including Seizure Disorder, G.E.R.D., and Infantile Spasms. Our healthy, happy daughter (who had been on track to this point) began to decline quite rapidly. At one point, we were even told that Megan would never do anything and that we should just "institutionalize" her and forget it. This, to us, was unacceptable. There is always hope! God entrusted Megan to us and because of this gift, we will do our best to help her reach her full potential.

It was shortly after her diagnosis in the Children's Hospital that we were introduced to Early Intervention by the hospital social worker, Jennifer Werner. She was extremely helpful and instrumental to our getting the

help that we needed. She told us that there were resources to help us get the best possible care for Megan and to cope with finding out that we had a child with "special needs." She promptly put us in contact with local services as well as with doctors in other areas of the country that were able to provide treatment for Megan. "Early Intervention" for us includes working with our speech therapist, our occupational therapist, and our physical therapist, as well as home visits by our early interventionist.

Tennessee Early Intervention got the "ball rolling." They came into our home and took necessary information, and then promptly got us into the system in which we would receive medical, financial, educational, and emotional services. These services have made all the difference in the world as they came into our lives at a point where we didn't know what or whom to ask. These services have allowed us to do what we wanted to do for our daughter: *help her reach her maximum potential.*

Early Intervention has helped our family in ways that can never be put into words. Besides helping us get Megan the care that she needs, it has provided support and a sounding board when things get tough. The people from EI have been just as good

to our entire family as they have Megan. Lawton, Megan's older brother, has had trouble understanding what is going on, and they have made him feel a part of things. James and I have had to cope with the stress associated with having a child with special needs.

As with all "roller coaster rides" there are "highs and lows." The fact is that there is never enough time to go around. We constantly have people (coordinators, counselors, therapists, etc.) in and out of our home at all different times during the week. We have trouble sometimes getting Megan's medical appointments scheduled around therapy, and we do not want her to miss either. Then we try to make time for us as a whole family, special time for Lawton, special time for James and myself, and then just time to fit in everything else that must be done in life. You know, all those responsibilities like cleaning house, taking out trash, cutting grass, visiting and caring for extended family and friends, going to the bank, church, etc.

The stress comes from trying to lead as normal a life as possible while meeting the needs of your "special needs" child and not forgetting your spouse, other child, or yourself. Sometimes there are just so many phone calls to make and so many "hoops to jump through."

However, the benefits of Early Intervention for our family far outweigh the difficulties. Each and every person involved in our lives because of EI has become like a member of our family, and we thank God for allowing them to be in our lives.

God placed us in this place for reasons not known to us, and has put just the right people in our lives at just the right time, including EI. These people are using gifts that God has given them to make a difference in

people's lives. We, and others like us, are truly blessed.

