

# Raising a Disabled Child Has Its Special Rewards

**DEAR READERS:** October has traditionally been Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and has been so declared by the U.S. Congress.

Because I have so often heard from parents or grandparents of babies born with various disabilities, I offer the following, which has become a favorite:

**WELCOME TO HOLLAND**  
by Emily Pearl Kingsley  
"I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability — to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this ...

"When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip — to Italy. You buy a bunch of guidebooks and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michaelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

"After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, 'Welcome to Holland.'

"Holland?!" you say, 'What do you mean, Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy.'



"But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

"The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

"So you must go out and buy new guidebooks. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

"It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around, and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips, Holland even has Rembrandts.

"But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and

they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, 'Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned.'

"And the pain of that will never, ever, ever go away, because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

"But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland."

**READERS:** For information on Down Syndrome, and to be put in touch with the local Down Syndrome organization, contact the National Down Syndrome Congress, 1800 Dempster St., Park Ridge, Ill. 60068-1146; phone: 1 (800) 232-6372. Its hotline offers access to a wealth of information on any subject related to Down Syndrome. A telephone call can provide that difficult-to-find information or assist you in establishing contact with others in a similar situation.

## TAKE TIME TO TAKE A BREAK.

Every year we hear about people who suffer heart attacks when enjoying outdoor recreations. Sadly, many of these tragedies could have been prevented.

Whatever outdoor activity you like best, remember not to over-exert yourself. Take things slowly, rest often and build up to your maximum performance gradually. We want you to enjoy Ontario's great outdoors for many years to come.

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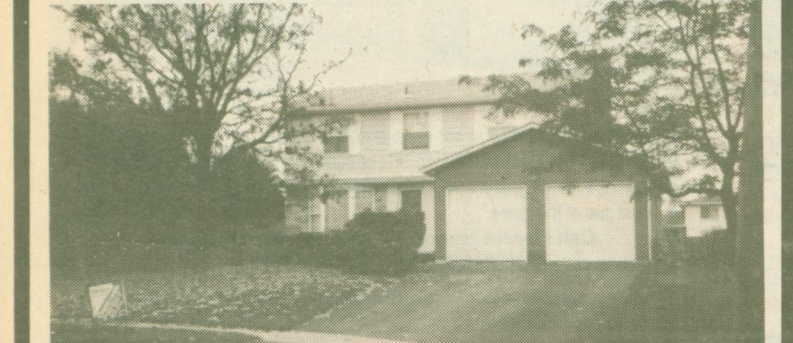
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