

A Mother Explains How “You Can Help Your Child *NOW!*”

THE REALIZATION

The pathway to getting help for our son, Adam, was a long one, mainly because it took so long for us to realize what exactly the problem was. From the beginning I was mentally making excuses for Adam without even realizing it. Maybe he was a little busier than other three-year-olds. His speech is just a little immature; it will correct itself in time. All kids are destructive from time to time.

One day Adam’s day-care teacher suggested that I come and observe for a while. She never said what the problem was or even if there was a problem. Since I was taking a child development course at the time, I decided to do my internship at Adam’s day care. Then I could watch Adam along with the other children.

All the things for which I had been making excuses became blatant differences when I viewed Adam in relation to the other children his own age. When the others were drawing on paper, Adam’s paper was blank. When the teacher asked questions, Adam didn’t answer. If Adam would answer, his response was inappropriate. This caused the other children to laugh, making Adam quite the clown. Adam wasn’t even paying attention half of the time. He was sometimes spaced-out, in another world.

Adam seemed to like it when he made the other children laugh. This drew attention away from the fact that he couldn’t compete with them intellectually. Adam was becoming very good at avoiding any kind of manual activity that would display his immaturity. But the biggest problem we noticed was that Adam kept asking us to repeat things. He’d say, “What did you say?” over and over. Or he would say, “Look at me when you talk.” Although we didn’t know it then, he was trying to read lips.

Once I realized that Adam was different than the other children his age, I began to observe many things about him. Although physically he seemed fine, he fell a lot and his toes slightly pointed inward. Adam was a little on the heavy side, and he didn’t enter easily into activities with other children. Instead of playing with a group of boys who were building and playing with blocks, Adam would play by himself. Mostly he hit things and engaged in destructive activities.

Even though I knew that Adam was acting differently from other children, I believed it was because of a hearing problem and that with the proper therapy and possibly a hearing device he would be fine. When he was three and a half, we started Adam on speech therapy twice a week. We didn’t really notice much improvement, but at least we were doing something.

Well-meaning teachers and friends were starting to suggest that Adam’s problems were behavioral, that if I were stricter he wouldn’t have these difficulties. Some suggested that I use physical punishment to discipline Adam. In their minds one

thing was clear—it was my fault. Not that I hadn’t felt guilty already—guilty that I had asked for a painkiller during labor, guilty that I had had a glass of wine while I was pregnant, guilty that I somehow had a child that wasn’t perfect. How could this possibly have happened to me?

On the local level we weren’t getting much in the way of answers about Adam’s problems, so we decided to go to what we thought was the ultimate authority, Children’s Hospital in Pittsburgh. Here Adam was once again tested physically and found to be very healthy. When he was tested developmentally we were told that Adam was severely learning disabled, and a rehabilitation institute was recommended. When we applied to the institute we were told there was a two-year waiting list. Now, I wondered, what was I going to do with Adam for the next two years?

By now Adam was old enough to go to kindergarten. We had informed the school system of Adam’s diagnosis—severely learning disabled. We also told them of his hearing and speech deficiencies. It was recommended that we let him go into the classroom and that we “wait and see.” We were told not to inform the teacher of any problems, but rather to “wait and see.” It was not very long before the notes started coming home. The teacher was concerned about Adam’s lack of attention. There were questions about his speech and hearing. The school nurse called me about Adam’s continual congestion and runny nose. I felt like they were looking to me for answers, when instead I was hoping to get some help and answers from them.

Once again we started the whole testing process—hearing tests, physical examinations, many doctors, many opinions, no answers. We were being told to learn to live with Adam’s problems. Drug therapy was suggested. I was told it would be just a temporary measure to improve Adam’s attention span. I chose not to use drug therapy since I knew of a nineteen-year-old girl whose dosage of the drug over the years had simply continued to increase with her size. I didn’t believe that drugs would solve Adam’s learning problems.

I was also told that Adam would grow out of his problems. I didn’t buy that either since it had been three years since we had become aware of Adam’s problems and he was not getting better. In fact, in many ways he was worse because he was starting to see himself as a failure and a clown. I later found an article concerning hyperactivity published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. It said, “Many children don’t out-grow the problem. In fact, up to sixty percent of hyperactive children become hyperactive adults.”

We couldn’t live with any of the advice we had been given. Although Adam had scored in the seventies on the IQ tests, my husband and I knew that he was very bright. How many three-

year-olds have taught themselves to read lips? Adam had become so clever at concealing his deficiencies that many people would just think his problems were bad behavior. Adam was starting to be labeled: hyperactive, behavior problem, disruptive, short-attention-span syndrome.

By the end of the school term Adam had lost another year (other than the social experience, which wasn't all that positive). At our year-end parent-teacher conference, Adam's teacher couldn't really say how much Adam had gotten from the year in kindergarten. They also didn't know if another year in kindergarten would help or not. Much of the time Adam was in his own world. He had now developed the ability to shut out everything at will.

We insisted on having a meeting with every person in the school system that might have input concerning what to do with Adam. It was decided that Adam would go into a learning-disabled classroom the next fall and that we would once again "wait and see." Two of the most frustrating phrases used in connection with Adam were let's "wait and see" and "it would have happened anyway." The latter phrase would come into play when Adam started making miraculous progress on the Intensive Treatment Program of The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential. I have learned that if anyone tells you to "wait and see" you should move on to someone else as quickly as possible, because what they're really saying is that they don't have the answers. While you are sitting back "waiting to see," your child could be making progress with the right program.

It was about this time, while our contacts in the school system were shaking their heads and saying, "We have never seen a child with Adam's problems before," that we received a book in the mail from a friend in New York. The book was *What To Do About Your Brain-Injured Child* by Glenn Doman. My husband and I were both skeptical, since neither of us believed that Adam was brain-injured. However, Bob, being a very fast reader, became engrossed in the book in a matter of minutes. He kept telling me, "You've got to read this book. It really makes some good points." I decided I might read it but only to become informed in general, since my child, I was sure, was not brain-injured.

As I read the book I couldn't believe that while the school system was telling us they had never seen a child with Adam's problems, Glenn Doman was telling us about a huge number of children just like Adam. And not only were there many children with Adam's same problems, Glenn Doman said that there were things we could do to help Adam immediately. We didn't need to "wait and see" any more.

I still didn't accept the fact that Adam was brain-injured, even though Glenn Doman described varying degrees of the problems we were experiencing in Adam. It made sense to pursue this avenue, especially since no one so far had come up with any solutions with which we could live. Despite our denial that Adam was brain-injured, we started to think about how to implement some of the methods Glenn Doman recommended in his book. We soon applied for an appointment at The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential, basically to have them verify that Adam was a normal, healthy

child without brain injury. Then, we told ourselves, our lives could go back to normal, whatever that was.

THE INITIAL VISIT

I couldn't believe the detailed information that The Institutes required for an appointment to reassure us that our son was normal. Every aspect of my pregnancy and every event in Adam's life since his birth had to be noted. I racked my brain to come up with any problems that had occurred during my pregnancy or Adam's life so far, but everything seemed quite normal.

Adam had had no severe illnesses, nor had I when I was pregnant with him. There were no major problems during delivery. I had asked for and received an epidural to relieve pain after about twenty hours of labor. This is something for which I have never forgiven myself, since it is the only thing I can think of that might have caused problems for Adam. I have been assured medically that this was not the case. Also while I was pregnant I had had a glass of wine or two (not a lot) and I shall forever feel guilty about that as well.

I continued to complete the detailed history form just because it was required to get the appointment. In the front of my mind I kept assuring myself that Adam was fine, but in the back of my mind I knew something was wrong. If I didn't get answers from Glenn Doman and his staff at The Institutes, what was I going to do next?

The letter finally came from The Institutes saying we had an appointment on the Fourth of July, 1988. I thought, "Don't these people know that's a national holiday?" I would later learn that in dealing with severely brain-injured children nothing, including a holiday, is more important than the opportunity of making your child well as quickly as possible. At The Institutes, every day can be one day closer to your child's success in life.

I knew after reading *What To Do About Your Brain-Injured Child* that if Adam were brain-injured (which I was sure he wasn't) our lives would have to change. In my mind I started reviewing things I was willing to give up for Adam. Naturally the first to go were those that I was ready to do away with anyway. I had been working two part-time jobs since I left my job as a department store buyer, and I had been taking various education courses, including business, child development, physical fitness and nutrition.

I was going in many directions trying to find something fulfilling, not realizing that the most fulfilling job was right in front of me—the job of not only being a mother to my child but also being his teacher, his friend, his therapist, his coach, and his ticket to a future in this world as an independent human being.

It's interesting to note that now, after four and a half years of successfully teaching my son many, many things, people ask me, "Are you a teacher?" My only response is "Who is not a teacher?" I think that everyone has something to teach another person, and that perhaps we shouldn't be so critical about who is qualified to teach. Even the person lying in a coma has taught us a great deal about brain injury. Likewise, our own children constantly teach us many things. I believe we are all

teachers. Don't waste any time, as I did, worrying about being qualified. Just start teaching. With all your good intentions as a parent, you'll do fine.

The day finally came for our appointment at The Institutes. I had my mental list of what activities I would be willing to sacrifice in my life for Adam. Little did I know that all of my previous activities would have to go (at least temporarily) and my life after this visit would not even resemble my life before it. I might add that although I thought I was happy doing what I was doing before we started Adam's program, it was nothing compared to the happiness I would experience being on the intensive program of daily activities that would help my child to survive in this world.

During our visit to The Institutes we were asked many questions, and we were given information about the brain and brain injury. In many respects the staff at The Institutes were describing Adam, but we still couldn't accept that he was brain-injured. We were still convinced that Adam would outgrow his problems and our lives would go back to normal.

As the first day of our visit progressed, we learned more and more not only about Adam and his situation but about all human beings and their development. I kept thinking that I wish I could have known this sooner, because it would have helped me to be a better parent in raising Scott, our older son.

By the end of that first day, we had already learned more about Adam's problems than we had learned during all the years prior to this. This was just amazing to us, since all of his earlier tests and consultations had taught us so very little. I knew that the staff at The Institutes had the information that we sought. It was the first time in two years that I had real hope that Adam would be helped.

Not only was I finally beginning to realize that Adam was in fact brain-injured, but I was praying that The Institutes would accept him onto their Intensive Treatment Program.

It was at the conclusion of that first day at The Institutes, which lasted fourteen hours, that we learned that Adam was severely brain-injured because of a lack of oxygen to the brain at some point during his development prior to birth. Unlike the dismal diagnosis given to us by the staff of Children's Hospital, who had nothing concrete to offer as a solution to Adam's learning disabilities, we were given the opportunity to stay at The Institutes and learn as much information as we needed to start Adam immediately on a home program of neurological development.

THE PROGRAM

I had spent the majority of my adult life as a department store buyer. I know that many people have grueling professions, but it seemed like I was always working more hours, flying more places, and moving much faster than anyone else around me (except, of course, the other department store buyers). It is a stressful occupation that easily leads to job burnout. Another problem was job satisfaction. No matter how much money I made for the store it was never enough. If I increased the store's sales by a million dollars one year, I was expected to top it the next year.

As difficult as retailing was and as many hours as I worked,

that job was nothing compared to how hard I worked with Adam's program during the next few years. The obvious difference was that with the program I was greatly motivated to help my child survive in the world, and I received the constant reward of seeing his progress. The combination of these two factors has enabled me to work ten hours a day, seven days a week, for over four and a half years. The only breaks in the program occurred for evaluations and revisits to The Institutes every five months. I know now that with the proper motivation and reward, anyone can accomplish what otherwise seems impossible.

I also had a great deal of help from my family, my friends, and volunteers, and I had the constant support from many people via a prayer network. Whenever I felt overwhelmed I would be encouraged by the love and light of all these wonderful people praying for my success with Adam. I remember in the beginning feeling so helpless because I needed many volunteers to do the program and I had no idea where to find them. I spoke with a friend in New York who said that he would send out the message to the prayer line that I needed help. From that time on I always had enough volunteers. In fact, the hard part was telling the volunteers they had accomplished their job and that I wouldn't be needing them anymore.

From the first day of our initial visit to The Institutes, I felt that we were in very good hands. We shared the same purpose—making brain-injured children well. The vast knowledge of The Institutes staff combined with the parents' relentless desire to make their children well was the perfect marriage for success. My husband, Bob, and I consumed every bit of information we could during that initial visit. Never before had so much been given to me in such a short period of time. I thought my head would explode by the end of the week. I was, above all, thrilled that I would be able to start helping Adam immediately.

As the week went by my list of what I would have to give up continued to grow. In fact, as much as I fought the idea that our lives were about to change, they soon did not even resemble what they were prior to the visit. This was the scariest part. Making drastic changes and venturing into unknown territory requires a great deal of faith. I had the proper enthusiasm, but I lacked the faith that I could make Adam well.

Also, I knew that I couldn't attempt it alone. I needed the help of everyone—The Institutes, my family, my friends, many volunteers, and the prayer support network. If I would have known how effective the program would be, if I would have had even an ounce of faith in the beginning, I could have saved myself and everyone around me a lot of anguish.

By the end of the initial visit week, I had mentally eliminated every activity from my life other than Adam's program, except for one aerobics class, and during the ride home from Philadelphia I realized that even that would have to go. I also realized that I needed about five more hours in each day to accomplish Adam's program.

Each program given at The Institutes is specifically designed to meet the needs of the individual child. Because of this and the fact that the program is being constantly changed and updated, it would be difficult to go into detail about what we

had to accomplish. However, one thing is certain—the Intensive Treatment Program is all encompassing for the brain-injured child and his family. It focuses on the most blatant problems but treats the individual as a whole, intellectually, physically, physiologically, socially, and, even though it is not stated as a part of the program, spiritually.

My experience has taught me that the loving support of The Institutes, the families, the friends, and the volunteers, all combining their efforts for the sole purpose of helping a hurt child, is one of the most powerful spiritual experiences anyone can have.

The key word for a successful home program is “daily.” In order to make permanent changes in an organism, and anyone can prove this via daily exercise, repetition is required. The same principle applies to the brain. The more repetition, or reinforcement, the better the chances of making permanent positive changes. The success of Adam’s program, and every child’s program, requires frequency, intensity, and duration. From the time Adam gets up each morning until he goes to bed he is repeatedly given information and the opportunity to use that information.

One of Adam’s biggest problems was his auditory discrimination. Adam had problems with his startle reflex and his vital response. He also had trouble understanding language. Every day I would present Adam with startle sounds (at least thirty), vital response sounds (at least fifteen) and meaningful sounds (at least twenty). We would also do an intellectual program that included reading, writing, math, science, foreign languages, music, art, history, and areas of special interest, like geology and chemistry.

Physically Adam’s program has progressed from many hours of creeping and crawling to the Physical Superiority Program. He now runs three to six miles each day, does fifty sit-ups, twenty push-ups, three chin-ups, brachiation, gymnastics and many special skills like the balance beam and jumping rope.

Adam does this in addition to working out with the swim team, attending a gymnastic class, and participating in downhill skiing and 10K running races. One parent is required to be present and participate if possible in the activities, so right now Adam and I are both physically excellent for our respective ages. I have always enjoyed physical activities, but I never tackled them with daily intensity until it was for such a good cause—my son’s health and his ability to survive in life.

Carrying out Adam’s intellectual program was a real challenge to me, since I hadn’t spent a great deal of time on intellectual activities during my school days. Instead, I had frequently been distracted by the social aspects of school life. The Intellectual Program gave me a second chance to learn what I had missed, plus a whole world of new information. For example, I had never studied Japanese before, but I found myself teaching it to Adam.

At one point in the program Adam had to do a great deal of walking. During these walks I would tell him about things I had read in the newspaper. Adam enjoyed this so much he couldn’t wait for the walks to learn about the news. As soon as we got the newspaper in the morning we had to sit down and

read it together. Our local newspaper sponsored a contest and asked readers to write and tell them why they liked the newspaper. Adam entered the contest and won \$500 for writing, “I am learning to read with the *Tribune-Review*. My mom and I read it every day.”

This, of course, was absolutely true. At first Adam considered buying toys with the prize money, but he decided to donate it to The Institutes so that they could buy respiratory-patterning machines for the brain-injured children. It has been so rewarding to all of us to see how well the brain-injured children on the Intensive Treatment Program progress. Since lack of adequate oxygen goes hand-in-hand with brain injury, the respiratory-patterning machines can help produce dramatic results. We were very proud of Adam for making the decision to donate the money for this purpose.

Adam’s own program included frequent masking sessions to help his brain receive more oxygen. The mask is a small plastic bag that covers the mouth and nose, causing the person to breath in the carbon dioxide that he has exhaled. This triggers a reaction in the body that causes the blood vessels in the brain to dilate. Over a period of time the brain gets more oxygen. This alone can produce many positive results, including relaxation.

This technique and brain injury in general is covered thoroughly in Glenn Doman’s book *What To Do About Your Brain-Injured Child*. Rather than teach you about brain injury, it is my goal to let you know there is a vast amount of information available through the books, courses, and programs of The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential.

Because The Institutes are recognized worldwide and the knowledgeable staff is kept very busy, I would recommend that you learn more about brain injury and early childhood development by reading any or all of the books written by Glenn Doman.

The next step would be to take one of the courses given by The Institutes depending on your need—either the *What To Do About Your Brain-Injured Child* Course (for a brain-injured child) or the *How To Multiply Your Baby’s Intelligence* Course (for a well child). These courses will lead you to acquiring individual attention and designing individual programs. While there is sometimes a waiting list for these courses, reading Glenn Doman’s books can provide you with enough information to get started while you are waiting for personalized treatment.

DO SOMETHING

It’s hard to go too far wrong in trying to help your child. Armed with the information in Glenn Doman’s books and your own good intentions, anything you do is better than doing nothing. I used to have a boss in retailing who was always saying “It doesn’t matter so much what you do as long as you do something.” In other words, don’t sit and think about it anymore. Get started. The best thing to remember is that you are the expert where your child is concerned.

Starting in July of 1988 I began to do something. I spent at least ten hours a day seven days a week (with help) doing

many activities that have helped my son to hear and comprehend better, speak more clearly, become more organized mentally, and to become socially, physically, and physiologically excellent for his age.

DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME

For four and a half years I didn't really have much time to think about myself, which is probably a good thing. I was so involved in doing the program and pointing out to people how busy I was that I didn't notice the positive things that were happening to me. My family and friends were very supportive and saw me through some stressful times. Although they would encourage me, telling me that I was doing a good job and that I looked good, I really thought they were just saying that to keep me going and because they loved me.

However, after several years of my doing the program with Adam, a person who was under no obligation to compliment me said, "You really look good." After a good look in the mirror I realized that by doing Adam's physical program with him I had accomplished what I had never before had the willpower to do. The running, brachiation, sit-ups, chin-ups, creeping, crawling, swimming, rolling, etc. had taken pounds off my weight and inches off my figure. In addition, the nutritional part of the program had given me energy I had never known in my adult life. For the first time, the scale told me that I was a normal weight for my height and build.

Not only were the physical results incredible, but I had also gained confidence intellectually. It is very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to stay ahead of a child's hunger for knowledge. While I had never been very good at chemistry, I now understand it much better after teaching it to Adam, along with physics, geology, Japanese, paleontology, and whatever area we chose to pursue. We've been to symphonies, ballets, plays, museums, the planetarium, and the state capital, and the list is constantly growing. It has been a fun way of learning for Adam and myself.

It took a while, but after a few years I finally quit feeling sorry for myself and realized that I would not choose to be doing anything else right now except teaching my son. Believe me, I'm not a martyr by any means. I truly have benefited as much as anyone from doing this intensive program with Adam. Now, when people say to me "I don't know how you've been able to do this program," I think "I wish I had been doing the program all of my life."

It has been four and a half years since I started doing The Institutes program with my son, Adam, and he continues to grow physically, intellectually, and socially. He is a full-time student in The International School on the campus of The Institutes, and his primary goal is to become independent in all of his intellectual activities.

Adam especially loves swimming, and this year he made it to the Pennsylvania state championships. He also runs, bikes, and participates in triathlons. In gymnastics, he recently became independent at doing a back handspring, and he was asked to perform a gymnastic routine for the World Organization for Human Potential. Most recently Adam was selected to address the United Steel Workers Convention in

Pittsburgh as a representative from The Institutes. There he read a speech that he had written himself.

We are very proud of Adam and all that he has accomplished since we started on The Institutes Intensive Treatment Program. Because of Glenn Doman and his dedicated staff, our son has a chance to live a full, rich life as a well-educated, independent, and happy person.

UPDATE—1999

Adam is now 17 years old and he is getting ready to start his senior year in high school. It was an important goal of Adam's to be in a regular high school taking regular classes with his peers. He not only has been able to accomplish that but he has been an honor student as well. Adam continued with his swimming on the high school team, was named "rookie of the year" in ninth grade and was one of the captains of the team last year. All three years Adam went with his team to championship competition. Adam is now very interested in football and is a member of the varsity team. He hopes to be a starting defensive tackle this fall.

Adam had worked very hard to accomplish what he has. I credit The Institutes and their programs for teaching us what we needed to do to help Adam to become successful in school and ultimately in life. Now it is Adam who is setting his goals and they are lofty ones. He almost daily receives letters from colleges who are interested in him as a student athlete. Adam plans to attend a four-year college and major in physical therapy. He hopes to be on a college football team and he would like to play water polo.

My life has continued to change too. When Adam went to high school I started working as a teacher's aide in a school for children with disabilities. I went back to college part-time and I will graduate next year with a degree in Human Services and teaching certification in Elementary and Special Education. I would like to help all of my students to achieve their highest potential but I know that it would be impossible for me to do the type of intensive, individually tailored program that they would need to accomplish that. I do encourage parents to become an active part in their disabled child's development. I wish each and every one of my students with disabilities could be on The Institutes program. It is my lofty goal to help disabled children and their families in any way that I can.

UPDATE—2004

It is hard to believe that I am able to write what I have to say in this update but it is all true and quite miraculous. Adam graduated from Allegheny College on May 9, 2004. He has worked very hard to accomplish this but the most important part of all of this is that it was his dream to go to college and to be successful. Years ago when Glenn Doman said that he hoped Adam would come and work at The Institutes when he graduated from college, I thought Glenn was just being kind. I was just hoping that Adam would somehow be able to survive in the world. I wasn't even sure if Adam would be able to go to a regular school of any kind, let alone a college. But I must say, if anyone has learned something on this journey that started with The Institutes, I have.

I have learned that if you set measurable goals for yourself, and regularly check your progress towards these goals, if you persist no matter what, if you never give up even when others are criticizing you and telling you to give up, if you set your sights high then put in the needed time to accomplish your goals, you will most likely succeed. I always found it interesting that sometimes when we were pursuing a particular outcome we would achieve many other unplanned milestones on the way to our big goal. That was true of Adam's physical program. In our efforts to help him get more oxygen to the brain through physical activity, he became a superb athlete. Adam swam all of his years in high school and played football for three years in college, taking off the last year to focus on his academics. I always encourage the parents of my students to make time for regular aerobic, physical activities. I do notice a difference in the student's classroom performance when they participate in regular physical programs.

Adam is now deciding what he will do after graduation. One thing he would like to do is to speak to parents of brain-injured children about his experiences on the program and to encourage them to work with their children so they can have the best possible chance to succeed in life. I was so proud of Adam when I heard of his plans. Although I knew for a long time that I had done the right thing for Adam by going to The Institutes and carrying out their program to the best of my ability and then some, it was so good to hear that Adam not only agreed with what we had done, but he wanted to help others to do the same.

Adam has moved on to a new phase of his life. We, of course, are a big part of Adam's life and I hope we always will be, but Adam is making his own plans and setting his own goals. To me all of this is "plus." In 1988, when Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh told us that Adam was not going to have a "normal" life I really didn't believe them, but I never realized he was going to have an extraordinary life. I am amazed and in awe at how this has all worked out and I have been so blessed to be a part of helping another person to make it in life. I can't give enough thanks to Glenn Doman and the dedicated staff at The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential for helping us to help Adam.

I would also like to thank my husband, Bob, for making this all possible. He frequently does not get the credit for all of Adam's accomplishments, like Adam and I do, but he has been supporting us through it all and he has also been a major participant in the program itself. It was Bob who took over the physical program when Adam surpassed me. It was Bob who somehow paid the bills and never put pressure on me to contribute financially while I was doing Adam's program. It was Bob who was always there to tell us we were doing a good job and that he was so proud of us. I know we could have never done what we did without him.

While Adam was in college I went back to college, got my teaching certification in Regular and Special Education. I graduated with a master's degree in Special Education on May 8, 2004, one day before Adam graduated with his bachelor's degree. I am very busy teaching in a middle school in Western Pennsylvania. I love my job and I see great

progress with my students, but everyday I wish that they all could be doing programs with The Institutes so that they can have the best possible chance to succeed in life. I hope that every parent reading this will realize that they are the key to their child's success in life. I will always feel happy knowing that I did everything that I could possibly do for Adam.

UPDATE—2006

I don't know where the time goes but another two years have passed. I would have liked Adam to write his update but he has become very busy, enjoying his challenging, but interesting life. Adam, upon graduation from college, took a full-time job at the local high school. He is an instructional aide for a brain-injured young man diagnosed with cerebral palsy. After working in this position for several months, Adam decided that he would pursue a teaching career. He enrolled in Seton Hill University's master's degree/teaching certification program and he has almost completed his course of study. Adam will be student teaching in spring 2007. It is amazing to see how far Adam has come and how much he has been able to achieve. I was glad when he decided to become a teacher, because it has been such a rewarding career for me.

While attending college, Adam met a wonderful young woman. They started dating and in 2005, they became engaged. Right now the wedding date is set for June of 2008.

UPDATE—2008

The past two years have been very eventful for Adam and for all of us. On June 27, 2008, Adam and April got married. That same week Adam found out that he was hired by the Intermediate Unit as a full-time teacher. He started his new teaching job in August and is really enjoying working with his students. I think this was a very good career choice for Adam. Adam and April also just purchased their first home and will be moving into it in the near future.

After earning my master's degree I continued to add areas of certification to become "highly qualified" to teach many subjects to students with disabilities. I am now certified to teach Special Education K-12, Social Studies K-12, Elementary Education, Mid-level Math, Mid-level Language Arts and Mid-Level Science. I continue to enjoy teaching in a middle-school setting where I regularly train student teachers. I also teach at a local university and I supervise a summer internship program for student teachers majoring in Special Education.

Right now I just watch in amazement because I could have never imagined that this journey that started on July 4th of 1988 (our initial visit to The Institutes) would have led to this point. But I am very grateful that we did find The Institutes and that we did do the best program that we could do.

I could go on and on, but the most important thing I have learned is that parents are the answer. It is up to us as parents to do what needs to be done. I found the information I received from The Institutes to be exactly what I was looking for. We had to do the work but I wouldn't trade the experience for anything, and we continue to be rewarded daily.

—by *Jacque Johnston, Professional Mother*—