

## Rachel and Sara

Rachel was 38 when Sara was born. Weighing in at just 4 pounds 6 ounces, her new baby girl exhibited signs of cerebral palsy and other developmental delays. Rachel however could see that Sara was perfect - exactly as she was.

Home from the hospital less than 6 months, Sara's father was beating Rachel again. She was afraid for herself and for little Sara, so she ran. There was not much to pack and only enough money to get them one long bus ride away to another town in another state. Rachel stepped off the bus in downtown Vancouver, where she knew no one but the bundle in her arms.

Looking for a place to warm up and feed Sara, Rachel plopped herself down into a booth at Joe Brown's Downtown Café. There she caught the eye of Linda, who was on her way home from her job doing laundry in a nursing home. Although Linda was bone-weary tired she looked over at the newcomers and was soon sitting across the booth offering Sara a bottle while Rachel ate. Linda decided she needed to take this woman with mental retardation and the little baby home with her. Christmas lights twinkled in the window.

### ***Rachel and Sara Find PRIDE***

Last December PRIDE for Kids at the Arc of Clark County received a call from a public health nurse who wanted an evaluation of an almost year old infant who could not sit up. She explained that the mother had developmental disabilities herself and was very afraid this was a ruse to take her baby girl away.

PRIDE's Director, Claire spoke with Rachel on the phone and asked her what she most wanted for her baby. "I want my baby to sit and play," was Rachel's quick reply. "Well," said Claire, "If you bring your baby here, you can be with her all the time, and we will help her to sit and play."

When Rachel came to PRIDE the staff made sure each step of their thorough evaluation was imbedded in play. PRIDE's staff made sure they were gentle with Rachel understanding she might need extra time as they transitioned from one part of the evaluation to the next. They came to learn Rachel's story, and how three older children had been taken into state custody at young ages. They could see Rachel's incredible love and hard work in her dedicated care of Sara. They spoke with her case manager about the support both mom and baby was receiving and would need in the near future.

Rachel and Sara now take medical transportation to the Arc Family Center each week for individual therapy and small group classes. They have found a new family with Linda. In almost one year they have never missed an appointment or scheduled class. Rachel faithfully brings her PRIDE notebook with her and records exercises or things the therapists or teachers give her to do. Sara is sitting up, reaching out and making significant progress for someone who has traveled such a rough road in her mother's arms.

Rachel feels the acceptance of the other mothers, parents and grandparents who come to PRIDE's sessions with their children. Some have brought in diapers, outgrown baby clothes and other things for PRIDE staff to share with her and others. This is not charity, but simply how things work at PRIDE. Rachel also brings in bags of Sara's outgrown clothes for the PRIDE staff to share with others. She gives in return.

*Note that these names have been changed, but the story is real.*