

It's a Wonderful Life
by: Fred Gilliard Jr.

When me and my wife, Ailyne, had our first child Victoria in 2006 the joys of being a parent was just beginning. It was a beautiful experience to hold your child, feed her and be everything that your child depends on. I counted it all joy. We were truly blessed to be given a daughter with such beauty, strength and love.

In 2007 our second daughter was born, Isabella. Just like Victoria she was beautiful and very loving in nature except something was different, she didn't have much strength. We learned that our daughter had Down syndrome. As she grew she had issues with acid reflux, bladder reflux, strabismus which requires a 2 year old to wear glasses and epileptic seizures. Our hands have been full but she has been a joy to our life. The lessons that she has taught us is amazing such as: Love unconditional and don't hold grudges. She is truly a blessing. Even though there is a lot of focus on her development it has made me and my wife better parents. Instead of us focusing on telling our children to watch TV and go play it puts our attention more on our kids and being around them. I stand on GOD's truth that HE formed my child in her mother's womb and my GOD doesn't make mistakes. Since then my entire family has been advocating on behalf of those with Down syndrome by starting an organization called UPSide2Downs that has been blessed by the backing of our church family, prayers, friends and family and the Pensacola community! We are a presence in our community because education, inspiration and involvement is the key to positive inclusion. Be encouraged!