

Walking Through a Door to Peace and Calm

Family Spotlight: Meet The Steuart Family



Pam (right) shares how Jill's House helps her stay strong for her husband and three boys.

We caught up with Pam Steuart on a Monday morning after her son Riley stayed at Jill's House for the weekend. Respite was fresh in her mind as she explained what it does for her and her family. She said, "Raising Riley has given me the tools I need to care for him. I've gathered the perfect tools for my parenting toolbox. But after a respite weekend, I feel like my tools have been repaired, cleaned and put back in order. I feel strong again. You can't imagine how incredible I feel when I drop Riley at Jill's House. Respite opens the world up for a few days. It's like walking through a door to peace and calm."

Riley Steuart is nine years old and has two older brothers. He has Down syndrome, autism and an apraxia of speech. Riley's challenges with sensory integration make it difficult for him to be around crowds of people and loud noises. Pam mentioned a time they took him to a water park. "He just stood screaming next to the spray fountain. Of course everyone stared, and we've learned to ignore that, but we try to avoid bringing him to places he won't like." This limits the types of activities and outings they can enjoy as a family.

Riley needs constant supervision because he has no sense of danger and occasionally runs away. Pam and her husband Scott talk about Riley's care like a relay race. "Riley is like the baton. We pass him back and forth, always careful not to drop him and never slowing down." Without Jill's House, they never would.

The Steuarts are reluctant to hire a babysitter for Riley because he can't talk. "He wouldn't be able to tell me if he was mistreated," said Pam. "And because we have no extended family close by, Riley's care was totally our responsibility until I heard about a mom who trusted Jill's House to care for her son who has severe seizures all the time." If this mom could trust Jill's House with her son, so could Pam.

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—Pam Steuart

Pam loves that respite allows her to sleep in, wake up slowly and sit still without having to do anything. It also gives Scott and her time together. They'll go to a restaurant, the movies or a museum. "We have fun together, and we know Riley is having the time of his life at Jill's House. It's great for everyone."

*I can see the
finger prints of God
when I look at you...*

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Pam also shared that there are so many things she would not have learned if it wasn't for Riley. She said, "I don't think God gives special kids to special parents. I think He gives special kids to normal parents who need to learn something." She explained that raising Riley has taught her not to judge others by appearances. "So many people look at him and see Down syndrome,"

she shared, "but most of his challenges are a result of his autism. You can't assume you know someone before you've listened to their story."

Riley has also taught her to love without expecting repayment. "As I care for Riley, I know that he will never grow up and care for me. He may never even thank me for caring for him. But that's OK," shared Pam. "I care for him because I love him, not because I want something from him. As I practice loving Riley this way, I hope to get better at loving other people this way too."