

“Hi Bubbie”. You have to hear the intonation of those words to know the blessing it is to a Grandmother’s heart. The lilt in the phrase is such a joy.

Those words are a frequent greeting from our three year old granddaughter, Marina. Marina was born in October 2005 the fourth child of our daughter Kelly and her husband Chris. We were not aware of any problems with this little baby girl until Kelly told me on the phone from the hospital, that they were doing some additional testing on Marina. That additional testing resulted in the diagnosis of Down syndrome. Knowing the term and having a friend whose adult granddaughter also has Down syndrome, was really the extent of our knowledge of this diagnosis.

Perhaps I was a little naïve, but to me, there was no issue. We had a new granddaughter period, and period. My first concern, really, was to be there for Kelly and to do what was needed. For Kelly and Chris who brought this little baby girl home, I know there were many tears and anxious moments. After all, raising this child and helping her grow was *their* responsibility. Where to begin to learn what is needed to help this little girl. Our daughter Kelly is a very independent woman who tackles things head on. She immediately began to research and seek out any information that she could about Down syndrome. What we learned, we learned as a result of the information that she passed on to us.

There are more details of Chris and Kelly and their journey and involvement in DSAV, but I am really speaking from the perspective of a Grandmother. In my mind, there is nothing that Marina isn’t or won’t be able to do, and as the phrase goes, “She’ll do as you do, but at her own pace.” Marina’s Papa couldn’t be prouder of her. He rejoices in her every achievement, just as he does with the achievements of her older siblings.

Our experience with other grandparents of children with Down syndrome, has been so positive. The opportunity to meet these grandparents has been a direct result of the activities of The Down Syndrome Association of the Valley. I have found that the love and acceptance of these grandparents to their grandchildren has been unconditional.

Marina’s life has opened up a broader world to us and that’s not a bad thing. We have met many wonderful people, professionals in the medical field as well as everyday individuals who have also been blessed by welcoming a special child into their home and family.

While I have said that raising Marina is the responsibility of Chris and Kelly, as with any child, the influence and impact that grandparents have is an important part of any child’s formative years. There is a song that goes “What’s love got to do with it?” In my mind, the answer is *absolutely everything*. Love your grandchild!!! And, whether it’s Bubbie, Grammy, Grandma, Nana or any other title you’ve been given the return is better than any other investment you can make.