

In May of 2001 we were invited by our neighbor to see *Sound of Music* performed by Harmony Theater, a drama group in which her daughter participated. It was a wonderful performance that brought a tear to our eyes, a smile to our faces, and warmed our hearts. We knew then we wanted our daughter, Katie, to be a part of this.

As September arrived we excitedly anticipated this new venture, but Katie was very apprehensive. We remember as she walked through the door and saw a group of strangers in an unfamiliar place she was not happy and wanted to turn and run. However, the staff immediately welcomed Katie and eased her into this new adventure.

After that day, Harmony Theater became her life! She happily anticipated each rehearsal and talked about the people she met there. When summer came and the show was over, the routine changed and Katie missed the activities and her friends at Harmony.

There was one participant whose name was constantly mentioned and who really caused her to look forward to September and Harmony's start-up. His name was Brian and we soon realized the feelings were mutual. They became a Harmony couple.

Although Katie is verbal, her speech is limited and many times she chooses not to speak in public. The staff at Harmony always cast her in appropriate roles, and as the years progressed, her growth became apparent. She sang chorus songs, danced in group dances, and enjoyed sign language interpretations.

The directors understood and enjoyed her relationship with Brian. They were cast as Annie & Daddy Warbucks, Ariel & Eric, and other couples, enjoying their private relationship in a very public format. They would hold hands and steal a little kiss after they proudly completed their part.

She blossomed and was our shining star on stage. Harmony has been a very important influence in Katie's life, giving her many times in the limelight, stretching her abilities, surrounding her with friendship and love, and allowing her to participate in an activity which was far beyond our expectations.

Katie and Brian have been a couple for fourteen years with Harmony to thank for new beginnings. We are so glad we insisted Katie stay for that very first rehearsal. We just can't imagine missing out on such a wonderful experience.