

April 9, 2013

Dear Friends,

A little over 20 years ago, our daughter was born with a craniofacial difference. Almost exactly 20 years ago today, she had her first appointment with the CDRC Cleft Palate Craniofacial Team, whose integrated information, assessment, support and services have been essential to meeting our daughter's best interests over the years and enabling our family to best help her. We recall one day with back-to-back appointments with 8 different specialists, followed by a team meeting where everyone gathered around a table to strategize a multidisciplinary treatment plan tailored to our daughter's needs. The discussion was thoughtful, caring and inclusive, sometimes spirited but driven by one common goal and open to good give and take. It gave us wings. At the end of that day, we remember turning to each other as the elevator doors closed and saying, "Wow. All in one day. Not eight trips to Portland. Can it get any better than this?"

We did have difficult times, for example, disappointments when a fistula just didn't want to be closed after multiple tries. But staff was there to reassure, and our spirits were buoyed when we met other cleft-affected families on craniofacial clinic days.

The special medical care for our daughter is largely done. She is a confident and accomplished college sophomore with a bright future, whose health and promise owe a lot to the CDRC team of specialists who consulted and collaborated with each other and with us. These included craniofacial and maxillofacial surgeons, otolaryngologist, pediatric dentist, orthodontist, speech pathologist, auditory specialist, social worker and genetic counselor.

Without the CDRC Cleft Palate Craniofacial Team, we would have been left to our own devices and a hodgepodge of uncoordinated, mismatched, inefficient services, some potentially unnecessary (and therefore an unnecessary risk), redundant or just plain ill-advised. We know of families elsewhere who have been in this situation. Our daughter has an out-of-state friend born with a similar anomaly who gave up in the midst of disjointed services and has a poor result that is starting to negatively impact her life. This makes us especially grateful for the strength of the CDRC team approach, which in turn strengthened our family.

To the legislature, this is a thumbs up program. The CDRC Craniofacial Team rocks!

Sincerely,

Dean Hale and Lucinda Muñiz-Hale
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