



# Community Life

A Newsletter of Redwood Coast Regional Center

## Growing Up With Gabriel... *A Father's Story*

Scott and Jodi Hammond live in McKinleyville, California. They are the parents of nine children. The children range in age from three to twenty-three years old. Scott's eight year-old son, Gabriel, has evolved to be his father's teacher. Scott describes his life with Gabriel as that of a student as well as a parent.



*Gabriel Hammond*

"I learned that although Gabriel would never be a football hero or a brain surgeon, perhaps he'd be the best darned janitor ever!

The embarrassment, and guilt that parents of special needs children share is one of life's dirty little secrets. Although not rational or reasonable, these feelings are very real. We've had to retool, restore, renew, and rejuvenate. We've had to embrace, and look for, change. We've had to clarify what's really important in our lives.

How do we change? How do we get from there to here? The times of denial, reality hitting home, and people staring at us in stores, only add to one's frustration and pain. However, I am learning to love freely, regardless of the payback. I'm learning to

value all people. I know that everyone has special needs. Some of us just hide them better!

As Gabriel grows, he accomplishes many things; he just does them more slowly. Therefore, we have more time to celebrate everything.

Gabe is a tender, huggable, and loving boy who has taught us several lessons...

1. Whereas Gabriel may have intellectual challenges, nothing challenges his indomitable spirit.
2. Societal worth is indeed a relativistic concept.
3. We've learned to give without expecting anything in return."

Scott Hammond is a versatile communicator and speaking professional. If you are involved in producing local conferences or seminars, Scott has offered to lend his public speaking skills and a father's perspective on raising a child with special needs. You may contact Scott at: [scott@scottpresents.com](mailto:scott@scottpresents.com).



*Scott Hammond*

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