

Learning Disabled No More

By Liz Gibbons

When our older son, David, was in first grade, he had difficulty learning to read. At the end of the school year his teacher recommended that he repeat first grade. This was a shock. He was labeled as learning disabled which seemed a misnomer as he was alert and outgoing and loved to learn new things. We went regularly to the library for books. On one trip when he was about six, I asked him what kind of books he wanted to take out for me to read to him, story books or other books. He responded, "I want books about how things work." We grappled with the decision to hold him back, particularly since he had a January birthday and already was one of the older students in his class. One of his best friends was going to repeat first grade, so we felt that the two boys might be supportive of each other.

A friend, who was a teacher, told me about an optician who used visual training to help such children. Thus began weekly sessions with a truly caring man. I worked with David for a half hour or more almost every day at home. Dr. Rosica suggested some equipment we could build to help David with his balance and coordination in addition to other processes he prescribed weekly to do at home. After about a year of working with David, Dr. Rosica suggested we bring in his younger brother to be tested. Bob is three years younger. His evaluation showed difficulty with reading and only minor coordination problems. Bob required a very different technique. It proved to be a very slow process before he became a good reader. Overall Dr. Rosica worked with one or both boys for almost four years. Both boys were pretty good with sticking with the program, although David did reach a point one year where he needed to take a six month break from it.

Those years were definitely time well spent. Both boys graduated from college and are avid readers. David also earned an associate degree in electronics in night school and took additional courses in both mathematics and computer science. He does still show some remnants of his challenges with his handwriting, which looks like that of a young child. Bob loves languages, and he originally planned to major in foreign languages in college. However, he has a lot of artistic ability and switched his major, earning a degree in communication, specializing in video production. He has continued to learn French and Spanish on his own and hones his skill by reading fiction books in those foreign languages, such as Harry Potter in Spanish. Two trips to Europe also gave him a chance to spend some time in France using his French in conversation.

A few years ago I was doing some research on vaccinations and came across an article that describes what can happen in the brains of children when they are vaccinated. I went back thru the records I had kept of their immunizations and noted that both had had severe reactions to DPT and smallpox vaccinations. I have a strong suspicion that this was the cause of their difficulties. I attribute their success to the hard work they did with Dr. Rosica. It definitely paid off. I shudder to think how different their lives might have been if my friend had not steered us to him.