

Hearts and Home Wide Open for Special Children

Family Spotlight: The Clarks

Knowing you are expecting a child with an intellectual disability can turn your world upside down. Having that child and facing the constant care the new baby requires can be exhausting. Choosing to adopt more children with special needs, when you already have four biological children of your own, is a true, living example of God's goodness and grace. Meet the Clarks, a remarkable Jill's House family.

"We started our family with three healthy boys," shared Nina Clark. "Our home was filled with lots of rambunctious activity common to any home like ours. We were blessed to have a strong marriage, a wonderful family, and a home to raise many children in a comfortable, safe, and loving environment. In 2003 we were thrilled to finally welcome our little girl, Emma, who was born with Down syndrome.

"After Emma was born, I realized how taxing raising a child with special needs can be. I thought about all the other parents around the world who may not be as capable of raising these special children as my husband, Jon, and I were. I soon realized that Emma and her disability had a very special purpose, to teach me an extremely valuable lesson: We did not need to have more children of our own. We needed to save those who were already born.

"So in 2010, when Emma was seven years old, we adopted two-year-old Abby, who also has Down syndrome, from China. The following year our hearts were moved once again to adopt another child with Down syndrome. This time, Elizabeth, who was eight, came to us from Russia."



Members of the ever-growing Clark family renew their energy while the girls visit Jill's House.



The girls can't wait for their next visit to Jill's House!

After the arrival of the girls, the energy level in the Clark home increased dramatically. The girls require near-constant care. Jill's House brings periodic relief to the Clarks as they lovingly serve Emma and Elizabeth. When Abby turns six, she will join her big sisters at Jill's House, too. While the boys are a great help, there are times when Nina feels they all need a break in order to give the girls the best care possible. The Clarks learned about Jill's House after *The Washington Post* ran a moving story about their journey. A blogger following the story inquired as to whether they had heard of Jill's House. They hadn't, but soon set up an intake session.

"Jill's House has been a blessing to our entire family," shared Nina. "If we thought the noise volume was high with just our three boys, you can imagine how vibrant it became when we added three little girls to the mix! The time that Elizabeth and Emma spend at Jill's House is such a blessing. One of the biggest differences that Jill's House makes is that it allows our boys, who are such great helpers, to spend time doing other things that typical teenage boys like to do while the girls visit Jill's House. Plus, the noise volume in our home goes down dramatically during those special weekends!"