



Ty, age 11

Dear Friend,

My son Tyler Christian is my hero ... and my heart.

Ty (as we call him) is in 5th grade. He loves to read and draw, and he has a winning smile. We can't imagine life without him.

But 11 years ago, soon after Ty was born, my husband, Ken, and I had to do just that: imagine life without our beautiful baby boy.

You see, Ty had been diagnosed with Down syndrome, scoliosis and congestive heart failure. He was so fragile. His life hung in a balance as he struggled just to swallow and keep his oxygen levels up.

I've never felt so helpless.

When Ty finally came home at three weeks old, we faced many unknowns. Besides his immediate medical needs, we wondered: *What would his life be like? What, if anything, would he be able to do for himself someday? How could we help him have the best life possible?*

On a hunch, the first call I made was to Easterseals Southern Georgia. I was hoping for referrals and information; I got so much more. They gave me an overview of all the services they offer to help children with disabilities, like Ty, reach their full potential. They even pointed me to other helpful resources right in our community.

Suddenly, I had a sense we were no longer alone in this.

Granted, those first few years were rough. Ty eventually was diagnosed with other challenges: neuromuscular scoliosis, cerebral palsy and autism. He underwent several surgeries, and the doctors gently told us they didn't think he would live long, much less walk or talk someday.

But along the way, Ty also started getting therapy through Easterseals —

(over, please)

where people talked about what he *could* do, not what he could not. They gave us something no one else was able to offer: hope. Rhonda, Ty’s physical therapist, helped him take his first steps, and Merritt, his speech therapist, helped him say his first words.

And here we are today — more than a decade later, Ty still depends on Easterseals. They’re like our extended family. Where would we be without them?

Sure, Ty Christian still has more challenges than most kids. He needs surgery on his spine twice a year, and he spends hours working hard in therapy.

He’s a fighter who’s overcome so much, but he has not done it alone.

Our family knows that the only way Easterseals has been able to help us is by having people like you supporting them — people who understand that some kids just need a little support in order to have a great future.

I can’t tell you how much we appreciate your generosity and compassion. Thank you so much for “being there” for our hero and our heart!

God bless,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann + Ken West". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ann and Ken West

P.S. As a small token of our gratitude, Easterseals has enclosed a set of personalized name and address labels for you to use on mail and packages. Thank you so much for supporting Easterseals — and Ty!