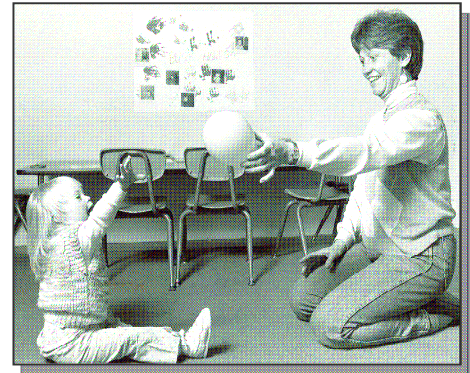


# Sarah's Story

Sarah is a beautiful young lady with long blond hair and the youngest of Peggy and Soren's three children. This is the story of the triumphs, successes, and challenges they have faced in her 19 years.

## The Early Years ~

Within hours of her birth, Sarah's parents suspected she had Down's Syndrome and this was confirmed when she was 7 days old. They knew with this diagnosis and the special needs associated, it was important to get help as early as possible. Peggy had doubts about what their small community of Machias could offer and recalls thinking "What am I going to do for this little child?" The Washington County Children's Program (WCCP) was involved from the very beginning.



**Sarah at an early physical therapy session with Betty Grant ... looks like fun!**

Sarah's early services at WCCP included developmental therapy, physical therapy with Betty Grant, and speech therapy with Gay Haroutunian. Peggy says, "It helped to know that we were not alone." Sarah received what is often referred to as "wrap-around services," where the providers work together. During the first year, therapists came to her home. She began attending developmental therapy group at WCCP by 18 months. Even with early intervention services, Sarah's developmental delays and other health concerns were considerable, but she did make gains. She began walking independently at 4-years-old and speaking in 3-word sentences at 9-years-old. Sarah has a hearing loss and learned sign language at WCCP, which she still uses. The family traveled around the state to access her medical services. Through aqua therapy and by age 3, Sarah learned to swim (before she could walk).

## The School Years ~

Peggy and Soren didn't think Sarah was ready for Kindergarten and wished she could have continued at WCCP's Developmental Therapy Group, but Sarah went on to school when she was 5-years-old to meet new teachers and friends. The Washington County Children's Program remained involved by providing the family with support through case management services, workshops, parent trainings, and monthly parent support groups. Their case manager attended monthly school meetings and connected them with "Ms. B.," Sarah's community support worker since age eleven! Peggy says she was "thankful there was a net there." However, as WCCP's funds often fluctuate, she remembers fearing each year that Sarah's services may not continue due to a lack of funding.



**Sarah graduated with her peers at Machias Memorial High School.**

In June 2008, Sarah graduated from Machias Memorial High School. And though many of her peers were ready to move on, she was not quite ready. She went back to school for one more year to focus on job training and getting ready for the future.

## The Years Ahead ~

Joan Pulkkinen, case manager at the Washington County Children's Program, assisted them in obtaining legal guardianship at age 18; and connected them with vocational rehabilitation services, an adult day program, adult case management services, and supportive living options.

Peggy has always been a strong advocate, making her daughter the focal point at team meetings. At WCCP, Peggy felt she was treated like a "professional parent." She even served on its board of directors, as a way of giving back to the agency that has helped them. When asked, "What would it have been like without the Washington County Children's Program?" Peggy let out a deep sigh and exclaimed, "A nightmare!" Though they've faced uncertainty before...when Sarah was born and needed early intervention services, when she entered Kindergarten, and then when she transitioned to high school, Peggy says, "[I] fear for what will come next without WCCP support." The short-term plan is for Sarah to continue to live at home, attend the Sunrise Day Program, and access adult case management. The Washington County Children's Program wishes Sarah and her family all the best and are honored to have been instrumental in her life and her success; we're never very far away.