



Photo courtesy of Photography by DeAnn

In past times, relatives and friends who were unfamiliar with Down Syndrome were sometimes uncomfortable around Amber until they became acquainted with her.

"They would ask us how they should treat her," Tom remembers. "That seemed strange to us because we had always treated her just as we would anyone else. Once people understood that, they were perfectly comfortable being around her."

As Amber has grown into a young woman, the multi-faceted aspects of her individual personality have sometimes captured the hearts and minds of her family members.

"She is very sensitive to spiritual things," Tammy notes. "She perceives things that other people don't recognize. That became very clear to us when our daughter Maria was pregnant. She was about three months along and we were all sitting at the dining room table enjoying a meal. Out of the blue Amber said, 'Listen. Do you hear that? He's giggling.' She said she heard the baby giggling and it was a boy. At that point we didn't know if Maria would have a boy or a girl, but she did have a son,

Thomas, about six months later. Just a couple of weeks ago, right after Thomas woke up, Amber was sitting next to him. I said, 'Thomas, it's Amber.' He looked at Amber and smiled. There's a special connection there that the rest of us don't have."

Amber is also very in touch with things happening around her. Her parents say she serves as a sort of watchdog for inappropriate language.

"It's never done in a scolding way," Tammy says. "But if she hears someone say a word that shouldn't be said she just quietly says, 'I heard that.' It's as if she's asking us to consider what we're saying and be careful with our words."

Expressing her own thoughts is not always easy for Amber. Her brief comments can often be clear and insightful, but they don't happen easily.

"It sometimes takes a while, but it's in there," her father Tom says. "Amber loves to dance. At a wedding dance she wore holes in her socks and danced till her feet were blistered and

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Dr. David V. Wagner



Matt Rumsey

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