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bleeding. We put band aids on her feet and she went right back to the dance floor.”

Among Amber’s numerous talents are carrying gifts to the altar at her church, gathering her family together for special occasions and singing.

“It has taken four years for Amber to become courageous enough to take part in the high school music group,” Tammy says. “When she was a freshman she wanted to sing, but she couldn’t get past the curtain. She stood behind it while the other students sang on stage. As a sophomore she walked onto the stage, but she wasn’t able to sing. She had to keep her eyes downcast. In her junior year she stood on the riser and was close to singing. Now, as a senior, she’s singing with the other students and enjoying it very much.”

One of the highlights of Amber’s high school experience was her nomination as the 2012 Homecoming Pioneer Princess. Fellow students nominated her and then selected her as their class royalty.

“It was fun to see the students support Amber,” Tammy says. “She was so surprised by it all. ‘Mom, they like me.’ That was her comment. She felt accepted by her peers.”

One myth about Down Syndrome individuals is that they need special education services and are unlikely to integrate into mainstream life. The fact is that most people with Down Syndrome have mild to moderate cognitive delays and fully participate in public and private educational programs. Some go on to complete college degrees.

Amber’s graduation in Spring 2013 will bring her family



together to celebrate her educational achievements. Her parents are working with local agencies to help find the right placement for Amber so she can take part in meaningful work.

“She loves to work and she can be very good at communicating,” Tammy says. “She’ll let you know if there’s something she

does or doesn’t like.

“We’re very proud of Amber,” Tammy continues. “In the beginning the doctors shared all the worst statistics with us and explained all the struggles we could expect to encounter. But we didn’t experience those things. Amber has been very healthy all her life and she has caused our family to be more aware of others and the important things in life.”

The Tacke family has learned patience and the value of looking at life from a different perspective.

“One of the greatest things we’ve learned is how to deal with Amber Standard Time,” Tammy says. “There’s no way to make her hurry. That has made me a much more patient person.”

“Amber has brought all of us closer to one another,” Tom adds. “She has been exactly what our family needed. There’s nothing fancy or complicated about Amber. She just pours out her love on everyone, blessing all of us, and she doesn’t even realize it.”

■ by Loretta Sorensen

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