

# Halie's story.



**This is a story about a very proud member of the HEART program at CYT Kansas City.**

Halie Rae has Down syndrome.

When our daughter was born, we knew that there would be developmental delays in learning, growing, language and that she may have medical needs. We started occupational therapy in our home when she was just 5 weeks old. She quickly taught us that she would learn many things just like our other daughters did, but it seemed to take her a little bit longer because of her decrease in motor skills and coordination. Her vision and hearing were normal and she seemed to understand us fine. We stimulated her with music and colors and every single toy she owned had to talk. We worked hard every day making sure she had opportunities to learn. She watched us, she listened and she imitated at a very young age. Her smile gave us the hope we needed to move forward each day with energy and enthusiasm. She loved watching the Barney show, but most importantly, we noticed she watched the kids on that show and knew them by name. She imitated their expressions and sang and danced along with them.

When Halie Rae turned 3-years-old, she started preschool. She also began Children's Church at our place of worship where we attended regularly and she was welcomed with open arms. She attended her class weekly, performed with her class in the Christmas program, and began attending bible school. At 4-years-old Halie Rae began dance class at a local dance studio and had her first recital. She loved going places and looked forward to doing the same things her sisters were doing. It was always important for our family to make sure Halie Rae was out in the community to share her with other families who had children with Down syndrome. We felt it was OUR responsibility to share the gift of hope with others.

We found out about CYT when Halie Rae was 6-years old. The HEART program at CYT has been a true blessing for our family. Receiving the CYT invitation for our daughter to attend and take theater classes with typical peers was a miracle. We prayed for God to help us share hope with other families and putting her on a stage for her to perform her talents seemed perfect and part of God's plan. He had answered our prayers.

Halie Rae started her first Our Gang session and has attended each session since then.

She is now 16 years old. She has been enrolled in approximately 30 CYT sessions. That is about 600 hours of lessons in theater. She has been cast in 14 CYT productions which have given her many, many hours of rehearsal time with her peers.

She had been receiving speech and occupational therapy at school, but after being included in CYT we had her dismissed from these therapies as we felt she was being provided so much more in this inclusion program. Dismissing her from these services allowed her more time to be educated with her peers in the regular classroom setting.

**At CYT, Halie Rae is given the opportunity to ACT, SING, DANCE and LIVE! By being a part of this program, Halie Rae has improved skills in the following areas:**

## ACT

- Listening/Attention span
- Communication/language
- Speech/articulation
- Eye contact/peer interactions
- Body language/expressions
- Reading comprehension/fluency
- Stage presence/confidence
- Teamwork/schedules/routines

## DANCE

- Balance/coordination
- Muscle strength
- Endurance
- Motor skills
- Weight management
- Sense of well being
- Physical confidence
- Flexibility/rhythm

## SING

- Communication/articulation
- Speech/eye contact
- Thinking/concentration
- Memory/learning
- Posture/breathing
- Increases energy
- Confidence
- Boost in immune system

## LIVE

- Greater self esteem • Confidence
- Organizational skills • Routines/transitions
- Social skills • Peer interactions
- Responsibility • Awareness of self/others
- Attention span • Positive attitude
- Faith • Friendships • Respect
- Leadership skills/teen assistant in CYT classes for 3 years.
- Independence

**Thank you CYT for helping our daughter become the BEST she can be!**

**The Strickler Family**