



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

When their son Bodie was born Dec. 27, 2008 with Down syndrome, Chad and Amber Yaw of Imperial knew of very few places to turn to concerning the condition.

Now, they want to support the Mile High Down Syndrome Association (MHDSA), which has become a support to them.

MHDSA is sponsoring the Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk in Denver Sept. 27. The Yaws are recruiting walkers and sponsors for Bodie's Bunch, their group of walkers.

The Yaws, who have two older daughters, didn't know that Bodie had Down syndrome before he was born. They didn't opt for any special screening, but did know that he was going to be a son.

After Bodie was born in Ogallala, their doctor noticed some classic physical features, and had them flown to Children's Hospital in Omaha for testing. Down syndrome babies often have heart problems, and they wanted to eliminate that risk.

Bodie also wasn't breathing well and had a low heart rate, but was fine by the time they arrived in Omaha, Amber said.

Two tests were performed on the baby, confirming Down syndrome, which is when a person has an extra chromosome that creates certain health and mental issues.

The news hit Amber hard, because the doctors were taught, she said, to hit the parents with the negatives right off.

"He will never have an IQ of over 50, he will never leave home," she said they told her. "It was so finite. This is what your child's going to be."

That's one reason the Yaws have become involved with MHDSA. It is lobbying doctors to change the way they present Down syndrome to new parents.

"I hope that the next person who learns this about their baby, that they don't have it presented this way," she stressed.

"The support help has been incredible," she said, of both family, friends and MHDSA. Amber said she spent over a month in shock. Her son wasn't "normal."

"Chad was OK with it before the diagnosis," she said. "I needed help."

Amber said Stephanie and Tom Rau of Imperial, parents of Nathaniel, who also has Down syndrome, told her about MHDSA. It sent her a "welcome home" packet, so Amber called and asked if she could be a member.

MHDSA sent a packet, books and a gift for Bodie. "I didn't feel any release of anxiety and sadness until I got that packet," she noted. "It doesn't have to be the end of the world" for a child to have Down syndrome.

MHDSA provides lectures, workshops and meetings for families with a Down syndrome member. They are held all across Colorado.

Amber said that although the Yaws haven't attended anything yet, it's good to know there's

support.

"It only takes one person being excited for you," she said, to feel "this is going to be a great lesson in humanity."

Bodie takes part in speech pathology and occupational and physical therapy through the State of Nebraska and its early childhood development services, although she said Bodie is a healthy and happy boy.

Chad said he thinks Bodie "will add to every facet of our lives." Amber said, "He's my boy. He'll help us become advocates for the disorder itself."

Amber added that Bodie will give her family a greater capacity for understanding. "He's going to give our girls the opportunity for open-mindedness and lack of prejudice," she said.

She noted that she and Chad treat Remington, 5, differently because she's shy. They treat Jecca, 3, differently because she's a red head and "fiery."

"We're going to treat Bodie differently, too," Amber said, "because we'll treat him like a little boy and help him grow up to be a man."

The Yaw family and extended family will be walking in Step Up for Down Syndrome around the zoo in Denver Sept. 27. There are one and two-mile walks.

To become a Bodie's Bunch member, either a virtual walker or a donor, visit StepUpDenver.org and look for Bodie's Bunch under "find team" to register.