

MEET DAD, DEREK

My name is Derek, I am 25 years old, a truck driver and a father to my handsome 1 year old boy, Hudson. Throughout his first year of life, I have experienced many obstacles being a first-time parent. Some of these obstacles being something I hope others wouldn't ever have to face. After some genetic testing, Hudson was discovered to have something called DiGeorge Syndrome which is the deletion of the 22nd chromosome. It results in poor development of several body systems, but we were blessed to learn that only his kidneys were directly affected from it.



In the beginning of his life, this was a scary moment. Spending 3 weeks in the NICU but made a miraculous bounce back and improved tremendously since then. He truly is dad's little fighter. Unfortunately, his mother and I are now separated. Coming from a broken home, the last thing I wanted to do was have my son grow up in one. However, I have learned that it's better for your kids not to grow up in a toxic environment observing two people who never get along. The co-parenting situation has been far from easy. After Hudson came along, all my energy and focus went right into him. I wanted to be the best possible father he could ever ask for; I owe that to him.

Fortunately, this is where the Family Resource Center came into my life. Being a first-time parent, I wanted to find some guidance and just receive an education on everything I needed to know about being a great dad. As we all know, kids don't come with manuals, so mistakes were bound to be made, but if there was any chance to limit those, I was going to. I called the Family Resource Center asking to take a parenting class, they had me do an initial visit just a short week later. I met two amazing people that have been guiding me every step of the way: John and Vera. I am so grateful to have met you two, with all the guidance and wisdom you have shared with me to be able to provide for my son, I could never truly pay you back for that. I've been attending since June 2022 with no intentions of stopping anytime soon, they have become family to me. If there is anything specific, I could get across to everyone today it would be, don't let anything or anyone get in between you and your kids. They are the legacy we leave behind, the next generation of leaders, the change for the world. They deserve our very best as parents.

Hudson, you will always be my greatest achievement in life. We've come so far to get to this point. I am so proud to be your dad. I'll be right there by your side watching you grow and achieve so many milestones and guiding you as much as I possibly can through this journey of life. I appreciate you all listening to my story and thank you to the Family Resource Center for everything you have done for me, I am forever grateful.

MEET MOM, HALEY

My name is Haley. The Family Resource Center means so much to me and my family. We had the blessing of starting our family journey like so many others during a tumultuous time, many call COVID19. When we found out we were finally going to be parents we were so excited, but then the questions quickly started coming. Where do we go to get ready? What supplies will we be needing? Is what is happening to me normal? After freaking out and doing a bit of research I quickly found out that no one in our area was hosting any parent preparedness anything in person, and nothing our little family could afford either way. That is when I found the Family Resource Center. I remember calling nervously, awaiting a message saying they were closed or that it was all virtual and then, Carol answered. They got me scheduled to come in within a week.

The first time I showed up I was so nervous, but knew I needed to talk to someone. I had no idea what to expect, especially with the Covid situation and this being my first child. They made it so easy to get the information I needed in a safe friendly environment. The parenting classes have been incredibly helpful. The ability to pick and choose what I felt I needed more information on from day one and along our journey was great. From Mommy nutrition, to what to expect in the first few days, information on postpartum depression, and now toddler twos, the information is there for me. I thought it'd be just classes, but then I learned we could get help in the form of items. The diapers, wipes, baby clothes, general supplies, formula, and especially the Holiday shop were so incredibly unexpected and have been hugely impactful on our lives in ways we never anticipated. Christmas morning wouldn't be possible without the Family Resource Center in our lives. Neither would many of the clothing items for our daughter. And it doesn't stop there!

It isn't just the resources themselves but the people that volunteer there as well. We felt supported while I was pregnant, too, right before having my little one, and even after she was born and we were dealing with unexpected medical issues. I have no idea how in the past three years we would have been able to manage without the Family Resource Center in our lives, even after we moved out of Mexico, NY.

But for me I think the most important part is I didn't realize what I was getting at first. Lena has been my counselor for the whole time I have been coming to the FRC. That time just being able to talk before the parenting class meant so much. It allows me to be human, and it feels like Lena and the other folks that we've seen every couple weeks are a part of our family. They celebrated our wins, and supported our struggles, just like extended family. They are so much more, not just a resource.

