

hunger and environmental nutrition

NEWS

Winter 2006

American Dietetic Association

The Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group

www.HENdpg.org

A DIETICIAN'S JOURNEY BACK TO THE LAND



Mary Jo Forbord, RD, is a farmer and executive director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. She farms with her husband, Luverne, and three children in the rolling glacial moraine of Western Minnesota.

Biologically speaking, Julian is our nephew. In 1999, I got a call from my mother asking me if Shirley, my wife, and I could adopt him. My sister Juliet, who had a history of depression, would respond unstably to Julian's cries. We quickly decided that adopting Julian was the best thing.

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It was not until we enrolled him into preschool that we got a clue.When Julian entered pre-school, he would tantrum. We rationalized that his tantrums were due to the stress of being in a new environment. As the year progressed, Julian's behavior got worse. He would tantrum anywhere from 6 to 9 times per day. It also became increasingly difficult to leave him at the school. In the mornings, he and I had epic battles. He would cry, kick, and scream in the hallways. For an encore, he would run into his classroom and knock-over or throw anything in his path. Many days it would take 20 minutes or more to transition Julian into the classroom. To say his behavior was a problem and disruptive would be an understatement.

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By the end of spring, it was clear that Julian was very unhappy. We decided that we would take him to the University of Chicago Pre-School Behavioral Clinic. The conclusion was that Julian had autism. We were told that he suffered from Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). We were alarmed to learn that Julian had very little comprehension of verbal communication. At the age of 4 years and nine months, his ability to understand language was rated at 18 months. Julian's ability to speak was rated at 2.5 years. We were told that Julian really needed a more structured environment with continued speech and occupational therapy.

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