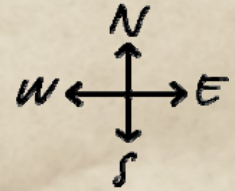


Hansen Journey Log



Log Entry Date: July 24, 2009

Caleb's home!

Immediately a room full of teenage guys begins jostling to greet my son with welcoming hugs and high fives as they shout, "Hi Caleb!" "How's it goin bro?"

"Miss. Rene, I think Caleb grew while he was gone!" 12-year-old Sam announces. Comparing Caleb's height to his own he cheerfully concludes, "Yep, he's definitely taller!"

Caleb was not the only one to come home. All four of us had taken a few days off for a much needed break. But the guys at House of Hope have a special relationship with Caleb.

I often arrive at the dinner table to find several guys preparing a plate of food for Caleb. They dish up rice, pull out hot chilies, pinch off shrimp tails, and give him a fork. They debate whether Caleb likes soy sauce or sweet- and-spicy sauce better. "He wants whatever he sees us eating," they eventually agree.

And then there's the occasional night we hear someone yell, "Mr. Joe, Caleb won't clean his plate!" followed by Caleb's irritated yell. Inevitably Caleb, knowing full well he is expected to wash his plate like everyone else, waits at the table until he thinks no one will notice and then makes a dash for the door - leaving his plate for someone else to clean. Sure, Caleb has differences, but in the end he's really not that different from any other kid in the house.



Caleb and Kosal

Caleb brings a special gift to House of Hope.

He daily reminds us that life rarely goes the way we think it should. I know, that isn't a happy, feel-good gift we particularly want. But Caleb isn't just a cold fact stating that life isn't fair. Caleb is a precious, growing, happy person. His humanity and delightful personality soften the painful blow that life can be confusing.

The guys feel sad for Caleb sometimes. *"I think Caleb would be a really cool guy if he could talk,"* one confided. But when we have personal conversations with the kids in our office they say, *"It's okay if Caleb's here, he's really good at keeping secrets!"*

Parenting a special needs child is challenging and at times discouraging. Yet Joe and I marvel at Caleb's contribution to House of Hope. Hidden behind their hilarious banter and contrived yet endearing toughness, the kids in our home carry significant pain. Caleb's presence speaks uniquely to them. He softens their hearts and inspires tenderness. Caleb reminds our home that even in difficulty, life not only goes on - but is good.

Thanks for journeying with us,

Rene