

*Patrick Park*  
photo by Chris Fritchie



## Bright Lights for Frisco Toddler

By Amanda VanCura

**PATRICK PARK** is your typical three-year-old kid. He loves playing t-ball, socializing at preschool, listening to music and dribbling a basketball. He has been a blessing to his parents since the day they adopted him in 2004. This young child, who was born with Down syndrome, seizes every opportunity and is showing those around him what life is all about.

In September, Patrick had an opportunity to help influence more than just his friends and family. He was selected from over 2,500 entries in the National Down Syndrome Society's video production to help demonstrate that people with Down syndrome can be successful. Approximately 215 photos of adults and children with Down syndrome appeared in the video, which was shown

on the larger-than-life screen in Times Square, New York. Photographs showed children, teens and adults with Down syndrome working, playing and learning with friends and family. The video, which appeared September 30<sup>th</sup>, helped kick off National Down Syndrome Awareness month in October.

"We used to live in the city and we knew about this annual video coverage," explains Carrie Park, Patrick's mother. "It's a way for them to reach out to society and give more awareness for Down syndrome."

Down syndrome, which occurs in babies born with an extra chromosome (47 instead of 46), can range from mild to severe. The extra genetic material causes problems with the way bodies develop,

which can also result in various health issues. Some children may experience heart defects, issues with digestion or may be more likely to get infections. Every child with Down syndrome is different.

Yet Carrie and her husband, who moved here just last year, say they didn't think twice about adopting a child with Down syndrome.

"We wanted a child with Down syndrome," she explains. "It was almost like a non-decision for us. We see Patrick as a child."

Having Down syndrome hasn't stopped Patrick. He continues to prove every day that nothing stands in his way. At three, he's already an "awesome" t-ball player, according to mom. He also loves baseball, basketball and even golf. He attends Crème de la Crème to get in his "social" time and also goes to preschool in Lewisville. Once a week, he enjoys hippotherapy, an equine treatment that uses a horse's movement to improve neurological function and sensory processing. And, he loves music.

Although her days are busy with Patrick, Carrie still finds time to volunteer with the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas. She is particularly excited about a new program, entitled Changing Lives, which will help get medical information to professionals to help ensure that balanced communication is delivered to expecting mothers.

"There's a 90 percent abortion rate when Down syndrome is diagnosed in pregnancy," says Carrie. "I see Patrick and all that God has equipped him to be, and it motivates me for this Changing Lives program, which will help get the word out to children and adults just how beautiful these children are."

Patrick is living proof that life goes on and the quality of life is all in the mind. As a toddler, he has already shown extreme enthusiasm and dedication. His photograph on the video in Times Square was just one shining moment for Patrick. There are many more bright lights in his future.

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*Amanda VanCura is a freelance writer living in Plano.*