

## Meet the Elbe Family – learning and living with autism

Tags: [encouragement](#) [preschool](#) [special needs](#)

We are the Elbe Family . . . Jeff and Adrienne and our three children, Evelyn (1995), our son Macklin (1997), and Vivian (2000). Jeff and I were married in 1991. Jeff works as an electrician and I previously worked as a school social worker in a therapeutic day school for troubled youth before the Lord blessed us with our children.

Having worked in a school system I knew I wanted something more for our children. More and more of my "mommy" friends were exploring preschool options as our children reached the age of 3. However, two friends told me they were considering homeschooling their children. I had never heard of this option and had the usual questions . . . "Is that legal? What about socialization?" Evelyn actually did attend a preschool program one day a week for a few months after Macklin was born, and while the program was good I knew I could do as good a job, and probably better, at home.

In the fall of 1998 my two friends and I decided to do a "Homeschool Preschool" cooperative. We each took turns planning a weekly lesson for our once a week get together. It was a wonderful way to "test the waters" and build one another up. The following year, due to pregnancies and births we decided it would be better for us to each do our own Preschool at Home, but the friendship and fun we had during that first year encouraged me with my efforts to continue on.

During this time I was becoming more and more concerned about our son, Macklin. He was a "high need" baby and at two was still not talking. He was prone to temper tantrums exhibited and odd behavior. In the spring of 2000 we had Macklin evaluated for speech and we also met with a pediatric neurologist. Shortly after the birth of Vivian, our worst fears were confirmed. Macklin was diagnosed with autism.

At that time I was overwhelmed and struggled with depression. How could I homeschool Evelyn, who was ready for Kindergarten that year, and work with Macklin, AND take care of our new baby? It seemed impossible. So with a heavy heart Jeff and I toured the special needs program Macklin would be eligible for when he turned three. We were shocked at what we saw. The classroom appeared to be disorganized and, in my opinion, several of the interactions between the staff and the children constituted neglect and emotional abuse. Macklin was nonverbal at that time. He would have been unable to come home each day and verbally tell us about his school experience.

At that point we decided Macklin would stay home, but Evelyn would be enrolled in the neighborhood school. I went to tour the facility, and again I saw that this would not be a good placement. I knew in my heart she would not develop a love of learning in that environment. I now realize it was the Lord who was opening my eyes to this truth.

Happily, I was able to attend the Illinois Christian Home Educators Convention that May. I had first attended in 1999, and I was so pleased to be able to attend (with my nursing infant in tow!). Being around other veteran homeschoolers, hearing the speakers and visiting the vendor hall is a sure fire cure for homeschooling doubt and fear! Attending the convention provided me with so much hope that we CAN do this task, if we rely not on our own strength, but on the Lord.

Our official first school year began in the fall of 2000. We have not looked back. The Lord has been faithful. I have learned to lean on and trust Him. I cannot do it, but He can, and He does. Some days it is hard, but the benefits are endless. My children are happy and loving as well as being best friends. When outside therapies were not working for us, the Lord directed us to implement a home based therapy program with Macklin, and he has made excellent progress. He is now verbal and makes strides every day. I have come to realize that the best Individualized Educational Program (what the schools call an IEP) can only be given through homeschooling. It has become a lifestyle for us. We are always learning together, everyday. And that is the way God intended it to be! To Him be all the glory!

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