



Happy Birthday, Ethan!

Ellen Datsis

Every year on both of my children's birthdays I write them a letter about the past year and what they have accomplished. It helps me to remember events and milestones that I would probably forget otherwise. I hope they can read these letters later in life and know how much I enjoyed watching them grow. It amazes me when I go back and read how far they have both come. Ethan has grown tremendously in this

past year developmentally. He has achieved goals I thought might be insurmountable.

I did have a few moments of wistful melancholy when I read Ethan's birthday letter. All the expectations and dreams we had for our boy were so different than what we dream of today. That does not mean they are any less important, just different.

The first two years were typical birthdays for Ethan, right on the developmental pathway. Then after we hit the two-year birthday everything changed. The birthdays became tailored around Ethan's needs at the time as to what would help satisfy his sensory needs while trying to accomplish a somewhat typical experience for him and us. Everyone works so hard to provide a wonderful experience for their child on their birthday whether it is at the roller rink, Chuck E. Cheese's, home or wherever. We want them to be happy. We want it to be memorable.

This year he was very lucky to have had two parties. The first one was with all his friends at Birchtree singing, dancing, waving ribbon sticks, and eating cake and ice cream. That was a wonderful time for him. Then he had his family birthday party at home and this year we wanted to see that million-dollar smile when he saw the 50 balloons all over the house, the streamers, the presents, and of course the endless frosting he can delve into. He loved it all especially the frosting!

Remembering how far our kids have traveled and how happy they are now is what a birthday should be all about. I felt a sense of pure happiness and contentment from Ethan that night as he laid his head on my chest while watching "Little Bear," stroked my cheek, smiled at me and fell asleep. That was a moment of pure peace. I will write about that in his letter this year although I will never ever forget that moment. It was timeless. Thank you Ethan for the beautiful birthday gift.

Ellen Datsis is the mother of Ethan, who turned eight years old this past February.



Painting by Holden



Painting by Daniel



Painting by DJ