

*An Angel Appeared by Maren Jacobs*

Family Support had changed our daughter's life as well as ours. Lisa was developing social skills and a social network that she very much enjoyed. She had progressed through an after-school program to a Saturday outing program and it had become an integral part of our lives. It also gave her Dad and I an opportunity to do things together - a true blessing!

In November 1992, Lisa's Dad was diagnosed with a terminal illness. There were many challenges over the next two and one-half years. In December 1994, however, we faced one of the most difficult. As Joe rested in bed at Berkshire Medical Center, I sat for the first time in days thinking about what else was on my plate. Of greatest concern was how I could support him in the hospital and still provide Lisa's care at home. Lisa needed someone with her 24/7, too. Most of our family members lived out of town and those that lived closer by were employed. I also worked full time. For the first time over the past two years I was feeling completely overwhelmed and ineffective. It was difficult to accept the fact that I was running out of gas and needed some help.

Suddenly, an angel appeared. It was 7:30 p.m. and it was a human angel. She very quietly entered the room and asked if I had a minute to speak with her. She escorted me to a sunroom and asked what BFAIR could do to help. I'll never know how she knew I was at the hospital. She obviously made it her business to find out. I explained to her that our needs were so great at that time that I couldn't imagine they would be able to meet them. As the Director of Family Supports, she made it very clear to me that that would be her decision and not mine. Over the next ten days, as Joe's crisis diminished, BFAIR took care of Lisa's needs from 7:00-8:00 a.m. and every evening so that I could be at the hospital. Then we met again and BFAIR helped me arrange for more permanent assistance for Lisa with a home health aide. What a tremendous relief!!

And once again, when Lisa's Dad was called home, BFAIR made immediate contact with me to offer their assistance. I didn't have to think about meeting her needs and she was supported by the kind, loving staff that she knew and loved.

While this angel changed a nightmare into a dream, she was one of an entire staff who during these difficult days earned by respect and affection. Lisa and I have continued to enjoy the support and creativity of this wonderful agency over the past fifteen years and hope to for many more to come.