

2010 Theme Child

C A L I F O R N I A - H A W A I I E L K S M A J O R P R O J E C T

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Born three months premature
- Diagnosed with a neuroenteric cyst
- Only two cases reported in the world
- First brain surgery at 3 pounds
- 13 Surgeries later—doctors say they will not operate again
- Elks assist Alexis for 17 years
- Alexis – The true gift of life is “Life Itself”



ALEXIS NICHOLE BOOTH
BORN ON APRIL 5, 1992 ~ 2 LBS. 7 OZ.

When Alexis was only one month old she started to go paralyzed on the left side of her body. Bewildered by what was happening, the doctors ordered many tests. They found cysts growing in her brain stem and cervical spine. At the rate the cysts were growing she most likely would have been stillborn had she not been born early. *Alexis' first little miracle.*

When she was only three pounds, she had her first major brain surgery to remove the cysts. It was successful and she regained all movement. Everyone believed it was an isolated incident and now that the cysts were gone they would never return. Her follow up MRI showed everyone how wrong they were. After thirteen major surgeries to remove the recurring cysts and three years of being in and out of hospitals, her

parents decided enough was enough.

Alexis was now almost three years old, mostly paralyzed and on life support. She was in a halo to hold her neck up and a current MRI showed the cysts were growing again. All attempts to cut off the connections that



were feeding the cysts had failed. They decided to take Alexis home to play and have fun until the end which could come any time in the next six months. The doctors removed the halo and sent her home. An MRI was scheduled for three months later to

track the timing. Alexis' next miracle was close at hand. The results of the MRI revealed no growth in the cysts...as it is still to this day. *Her second miracle.*

Alexis was not out of the woods yet due to all the damage caused by shunts, hydrocephalus and lung disease.

She had many brushes with death. In 1999 she developed meningitis and ventriculitis. They said there was no way she would live through the night. Well, she did and six months later and after a number of surgeries she went home stronger than ever. She coded many times just to bounce back like nothing happened. For her parents to remember it all it sounds too much for a child to bear and then they think about why she is here and what she has done.

ALEXIS THRIVES IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE

Due to her own strength and the support of everyone around her, Alexis thrives. Kaiser referred her to CHEMPI at one year old. Mindy Gulley, Occupational Therapist, and the Elks have been with her longer than any other organization through all the hardships. Her whole family is grateful every day for the support they have received. The therapy Mindy gives Alexis helps her with self care, her school work and her ability to move and develop. Her parents could not be more grateful to Mindy for being there for Alexis and helping her thrive against all odds.

Alexis has been a cheerleader and a straight A student. Her mind is that of a normal teenager, loves boys and teen movies and vampire books. More than all other things

she is happy and has come to peace with her life and limitations. She is an inspiration to everyone she meets and she has the gift that most of us search our whole lives for and many never find, the gift of knowing her place in the world.

Alexis is here to teach us all about the importance of life. She teaches us to reach for the stars while

knowing and accepting our limitations. What a gift it is to understand your own trials of life and fully accepting them and having true happiness.

If only we all could learn from Alexis and really know that the true gift of life is life itself.

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Mission Statement

The California-Hawaii Elks Major Project, Inc., a committee of the California-Hawaii Elks Association, pledges its commitment to addressing the unmet needs of children with disabilities throughout the states of California and Hawaii by developing a program of supporting services to aid these children at no cost to their families and without discrimination.

Elks Care - Elks Share

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS...

Alexis has lived with her family in Ramona all her life. She has two brothers and two sisters with a new sister due to arrive in June.

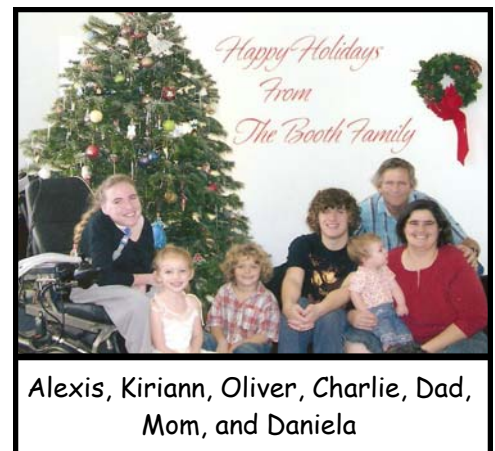
In addition to having a child with special medical needs and in raising four other children, there have been many other struggles through the years. The family has had to rise above and continue to do so as each new challenge occurs, meeting each one with a sense of grace and gratitude, turning negatives into

positives.

Thanks to the assistance provided by the Elks of California and Hawaii, the future for Alexis looks very promising. Over the past 17 years, Mindy Gulley, Occupational Therapist, has given Alexis the skills she will need to live and work in an adult world. As an Elk, you can be proud to have been a part of helping to prepare Alexis for the future.

Alexis plans on attending Palomar Junior College in the Fall majoring in forensics and

has applied for CHEMPI's Undergraduate Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities.



Alexis, Kiriann, Oliver, Charlie, Dad, Mom, and Daniela

