



Selling A House With A Special Needs Child

Article by Carrie Dimino

The last two years our lives have been consumed by a series of tests, most that we have failed in some way or another. Many have yet to be tallied. Our son, Miles, age 2, is the star of these mini-exams. From the moment of his birth, he has shown his displeasure at the battery of hoops he has been expected to jump through. Starting with, "not enough weight gain," to "slow head growth." Crawling late, walking late, talking ... not yet. FISH tests, MRI's, MRS's ... on and on and on he troops.

We put our house on the market about a year ago. This was at the same time Miles was accepted into the First Steps program. Starting a series of new therapy sessions and putting our house on the market was not the brightest decision we ever made. Recently, I had a con-

versation with my real estate agent that went like this.

"Why, why, why Debbie can't we get out of this house? Should we repaint the kitchen? Redo the bathroom?" I asked.

"Well, it looks like from your spread sheet that you have declined to show between 25% and 30% of the time." she replied.

I could tell that she didn't want to tell me that. She has been nothing but patient, kind and supportive. I was floored and aghast ... I had failed the test of being a good "house seller." Seventy-five percent of the time is hardly worthy of a star, it is barely passing! I promised to be more diligent about showing whenever requested of me. My agent, a rep from Cold-

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Banker in Belton, is amazing. She personally takes all of the calls by people who want to view the house and calls us back so that we can find time between therapies, before or after nap, not during dinner or he won't eat at all. It really limits the time slots for showing the house.

Our conversation are often comical.

"So, can you show on Monday between 9:30-10:30?" she asks.

"Speech." I answer. "PT in the evening."

"Wednesday?" she queries. "11-12?"

"Nap," is my snappish reply.

My agent was thrilled, to the point of tears of frustration, when I told her we were starting ABA therapy to the tune of 6-10 hours a week and people were going to have to start viewing the house at 8 a.m. or on Saturdays. Not a bright outlook for her or us either. At least that is one way of looking

at it. Of course the opportunity for Miles and our family to learn and grow together through a new therapy is a gift.

I think about this last year and how many times I have frantically cleaned the house, with the baby chasing after me undoing everything I do. Having to stop for a few precious minutes to swing or brush or massage him so he'll calm down enough for me to finish mopping the floor or cleaning up the coffee he tipped over, or even yanking a brush through my own hair. How often I've had to leave a note on the door warning of wet floors. The humiliation of leaving without the bed made or unwashed dishes in the sink.

Selling a house with a child with special needs is not an easy task. I'd like to say that we are happily ensconced in our new home, in the "perfect district." That each of our boys has a bedroom, that I have a dishwasher and my husband has a space to paint pictures, but it is yet to happen. We all still troop on, failing tests in our

own way, passing others of far more importance. Miles is walking now, starting down the wonderful world of language and learning how to deal with a world overcrowded by senses. I've learned that a house is just a house and no matter when or where we move our home is always within. Here is a small list of what I wish I had known a year ago.

No matter how important moving is, my child comes first. If I have to cancel a showing, or decline a showing because of therapy or a nap or even because he is just not willing to leave the house for an hour, then I suppose I am a "house-selling failure." But of course, I'll take this test like all the others, with a grain of salt, as I begin to understand the depth and wonder of having a child with special needs.

Happy selling to all of you! Anyone interested in an amazing realtor, who really does have experience working with families with kids with special needs, I am on the listserve!