

Record

329

File Number

10296

Author: Dearden, Tricia

Title: Family has love, security: Bias is still their biggest  
'handicap'

Original source: Manly Daily Newspaper

Resource type: Newspaper

Publication Date: 02/04/92

Publisher Info: -

**Abstract**

This brief newspaper article is about a Sydney couple who both have cerebral palsy and are the subjects of a poster about peoples' attitudes. The Morgans have two children and they candidly discuss the discrimination they and their children face, especially from older people rather than their own children's friends. **Keyword: Attitudes**

# **FAMILY HAS LOVE, SECURITY**

## **Blas Is still their biggest 'handicap'**

by Tricia Dearden

A Beacon Hill couple who have raised 15-year-old twins and forged a family life of their own despite society's expectations will be giving us all a message during Cerebral Palsy Week this week.

John Morgan, his wife Cheryl and their two children are the subjects of a poster being displayed at Sydney railway stations.

"They said that John would never walk, work or wed", the poster says. "John's worst handicap is other people's attitudes".

John works for the rights of disabled people as project officer at the Allambie Spastic Centre's consumer unit. He was the first person from the Spastic Centre to obtain a driver's licence and has driven for 31 years.

He and Cheryl - both have cerebral palsy - live in their own home in Warringah Road.

Against the advice of some people in the medical profession they married and had children.

John says he fights people's attitudes on a daily basis.

"My job is to give information to people with disabilities, to encourage them to make their own decisions and to have control over their own lives", he said. He says things are changing, mainly because young people are slowly being educated.

"My son brings his friends home and they readily accept us as people - better than some of their parents", he said. John and Cheryl said it hurt that people wrongly assumed their 15-year-old daughter's intellectual handicap was inherited from them.

They attend parent meetings at both their children's schools and said some other parents still had a lot to learn.

In his earlier years, John remembers being stopped by police four times when he was out on his own.

When he and Cheryl went to a doctor for help with their daughter's disability the doctor was more interested in talking about their disability and could not see them as normal parents looking for help. "Even at home we are subject to 'put downs' such as when I answer the door and they say 'Is your mother home?'" John said.

They advise their children to deal with any abuse by "turning off to it", as they have learnt to do.

"There are one or two people who try to be hurtful to my son and he turned on one of them and said 'I have a mum and dad, do you?'" Cheryl said.

John and Cheryl said they had a good relationship because they communicated well and supported each other, not always the case with able-bodied parents.

"We are giving our children love, security, peace of mind, food, clean beds and a roof over their heads," John said.

"This is a lot more than many able-bodied parents are able or willing to give their children."

He also believes he is happier than the average person, "Because I appreciate what I have got", he said.