



BABYWEARING
INTERNATIONAL

The official BWI newsletter

Carrying On

Babywearing International: Bringing Together Babywearers Everywhere

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Welcome to BWI's official newsletter!

If you have ideas for our newsletter or would like to contribute, please contact Heidi:

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Feel free to enjoy this and pass it on!

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Save the Date!

International
Babywearing
Week

2012

October 8-14

Wearing an Older Child with Special Needs

One elementary school teacher's story

I was honored when asked to share my story with the Babywearing International community. I have been proudly wearing my daughter for two years (three come November-scary thought!), and would have worn my son more if I'd known about good carriers six years ago when he was a baby!

Babywearing is not very common in my area (though interest is growing!), and due to my full time teaching job and busy schedule, I unfortunately have never really had the chance to join a babywearing group or get to know many other local babywearing mothers.

The Babywearer.com's website proved to be an invaluable resource and community to me as I learned the ropes (or wraps, as it were) of babywearing—and this is where I first shared my story, because I knew my kindred spirits there would appreciate it!

This year marks my 10th as a teacher. I've taught the gamut, starting out teaching fourth

grade, then beginning my master's in special education and teaching both middle school and high school special needs students, then finally returning to my roots in elementary education teaching second grade for the past two years.

I've always had, it seems, at least one student with special needs in my classroom, and I truly love working with these extraordinary children and watching them grow. I was blessed to have a young lady by the name of Aly join my classroom this fall. Aly is a bright, spunky 8 year old, who was born in the Ukraine and adopted by her parents as a toddler.

She is quite the advocate for herself, and her disability rarely slows her down or keeps her from joining in with everyone else. Her mother volunteers in my classroom each week, and it has been a blessing to get to know her—she has a faith and conviction that I look up to and hope to attain some day.

Recently, our class was sched-



Photo Courtesy of Tonya Zerkle

uled to go on a field trip to a local park. Part of this field trip was going to be a nature hike through the woods.

Here in Cincinnati, Ohio, flat, wheelchair accessible hiking trails pretty much do not exist—and this trail, being down a hill and back up again, was no exception to this rule. Aly's mother contacted me before the trip, offering to help with ideas to

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Babywearing Makes FIVE Senses

Babywearing is often advertised as a convenient, hands free help in raising children. As true as it is, there is much more to be said about the symbiotic relationship that forms when holding baby close throughout the day and night.

When I became pregnant for the first time about 14 years ago there was no question about wearing our daughter, it

was a given. I had worn babies for twenty years before, babysitting for family and friends in Germany and I had seen how calm worn babies are. I did not know all the details of babywearing, it just seemed natural to want to be close to my baby. My husband became the first US dealer and distributor of German woven wraps after seeing how our baby and I enjoyed

being close. Meanwhile I realized through experience in wearing our seven children and research just how wonderful babywearing is on many levels.

Stephan Mayer, Ph.D. in Passau, Germany said: "A small child cannot think clearly, however he can, from birth and most likely even long before, feel clearly and correctly.If

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Thanks to babywearing, Aly was able to fully participate in her class field trip, including the nature hike. Photo courtesy of Tony Zerkle.

"But my mind started thinking about what we could do so Aly could come along, when the thought hit me—I could 'wear' her, just like I do my daughter, Lily!"

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accommodate Aly during the trip. Truth be told, given how independent Aly is, I'd almost forgotten she wouldn't be able to do everything just like everyone else! But my mind started thinking about what we could do so Aly could come along, when the thought hit me—I could "wear" her, just like I do my daughter, Lily!

I called Aly's mother soon after this epiphany, and discussed the idea with her. Her mother was very receptive to the idea—she said that in fact, when Aly was younger, she used to carry her on hikes all the time, using a frame carrier, but had grown uncomfortable as her daughter grew longer and her center of balance was thrown off.

I, however, have a Kinderpack rather than a frame carrier, and thought that Aly would fit well and that this could be a feasible solution to our problem. So, with her mother's permission, I brought the carrier into school the day before the field trip, and Aly and I worked out how to get her on my back and situated—thankfully, she fit in the carrier just fine!

She was giddy with excitement about showing the other

kids the next day on the field trip and kept bragging to them the rest of the afternoon that she was going to get to ride on the teacher's back!

When the day of the trip arrived, our hike went off without a hitch. I was geared up with my hiking boots and walking stick, for added stability. I'm not going to lie, the thought that I could fall with her on my back terrified me and I was probably overly cautious for that reason, way more so than I am usually with my own child! Aly had a blast—she got to see everything everyone else did, including climbing through the middle of a 100 year old sycamore tree with me! She even so kindly counted each and every stair I climbed on the hill on the way back up—all 74 of them. I was thrilled, let me tell you. But I was proud that I only stopped to catch my breath twice!

Seeing the reaction of the other students was pretty neat too. Several of them asked if I could carry them too, and they were excited when they saw her on my back. But mostly, they just acted like things were status quo and normal—Aly was with us, just as she always

is, doing what we all do!

I am blessed that my own children are healthy and have bodies that can go anywhere and see anything. But I feel so grateful that the babywearing community has given me a tool that I could use to help make it possible for Aly to be included in our trip, just as she's included in everything else in our classroom.

Tonya Zerkle, like many other babywearers world wide, initially found babywearing support from the community at thebabywearer.com. Her story originally appeared there..



Spring and Fall, continued from page 4



Photo courtesy of BWI of Central VA

and leading up to International Babywearing Week (October 8th-14), every weekend some of our members will be at Farmer's Markets running informational booths about both BWI of Central VA and about International Babywearing Week. We did a booth last year during IBW and had

a wonderful response both from the hosts and guests of the market. Any member who works a booth shift gets entered in a contest to win a brand new carrier.

We love being involved with our community, and so far our community seems to love having us. Local stores have asked our leaders to host classes and informational sessions, and we love to do it. We have a high demand for several meetings every month and pull from all the walks of

life the Richmond area has to offer.

We want to help people learn that babywearing is an asset, if not a necessity, for an active and involved lifestyle, but how can they learn about it if they don't see it?

We're spreading the babywearing love a little bit at a time, and we love seeing the ripple effect.

Kit Jenkins is a VBE with BWI of Central VA. You can find BWI of Central VA on the web at www.rcbw.blogspot.com.