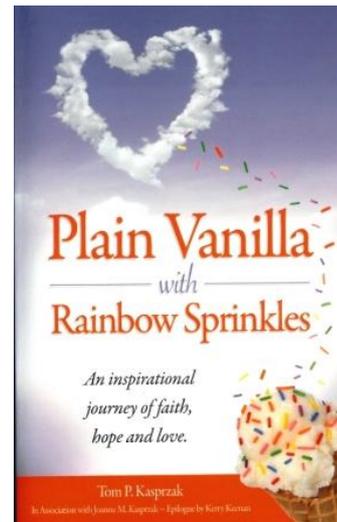


A Review of
Plain Vanilla with Rainbow Sprinkles

Author: Tom P. Kasprzak

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

This is a beautiful short book which tells the loving story of a family embracing life with a daughter born with Down syndrome who teaches them all about life in her own "plain vanilla" unassuming way. Mary Kasprzak faces a difficult life with determination and a smile that engages everyone she touches. Her too short life came to an end at the age of fifteen, but even in death she continued giving through organ donation, saving the lives of five people. Her life story is filled with challenges, both medical and cultural, which she courageously overcomes with miracles that strengthen the spiritual faith of her family and community.



Be prepared for your own strong emotional response to "living" with Mary through her father, Tom's, excellent story telling. There are moments that will bring tears as in just one example, when their Disney trip has one of the famous Disney fairy princesses come through the crowd taking smiling Mary's hand to come dance in their parade down Main Street. I can feel my own tears just in that recalling what was only a few minutes in her life, but a telling example of the invitation the reader feels to get connected to the stories he shares with us. Mary saw life in her own very positive way, so differently than most, seeing another human being as just like her, but who was struggling with their own personal challenges. She forgives those who mistreat her, doesn't judge others, just greets them with a smile and her famous, "Hi!" After reading her story, you too may never see life the same again. Mary does that to people.

Almost as their own added "sprinkles," the book concludes with some very personal reflections by family members of their life with Mary, including a final touching chapter written by the woman who, while never meeting her in life, lives today with Mary's transplanted heart.

This is a must read book first for anyone with a Down syndrome experience in their own family or community, but it goes so much beyond that. Medical professionals who may come in contact with such families would benefit from the deep insights found in their story. We all are blessed in the Kasprzak family's sharing of their daughter through this very personal and insightful book, one which will inspire all who take the time to enjoy its brief 112 pages, and that impact will linger long in your heart, still another gift of "rainbow sprinkles" from Mary through her shared life story.

Note: **Plain Vanilla with Rainbow Sprinkles** is available in paperback from Amazon.com. ALL proceeds are donated to charities that help special needs organizations.

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, continues as a volunteer with Philadelphia's Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF, ALF and UNOS. As a nationally recognized speaker and author, his own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained in CD format for free by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.