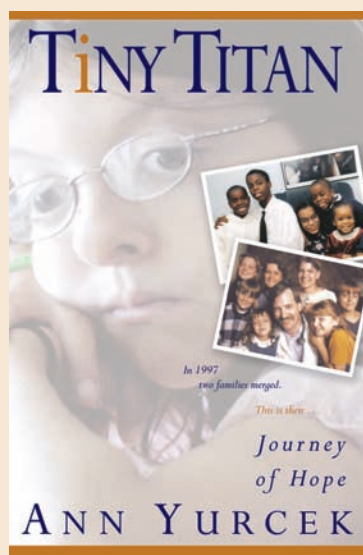


TINY TITAN: JOURNEY OF HOPE

By Ann Yurcek

"Tiny Titan: Journey of Hope will find many audiences and its autobiographical account of a struggle is truly inspirational" – Midwest Book Review

The Story of the Family That Would Not Give Up



TITLE: TINY TITAN: JOURNEY OF HOPE

WWW.TINYTITAN.ORG

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NEW BEGINNINGS

WWW.BETTERENDINGS.ORG

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*"We were
blessed
by our
adversity."*

Ann Yurcek



Ann Yurcek started out as “just” the mom of five children. However, life for the Yurceks changed dramatically in 1989 after Ann’s sixth child, Becca, was born with a rare genetic disorder that affected every system in her tiny body. When the medical bills reached \$1,000,000.00 her husband, Jim, lost his job as a carpet salesman and the family spiraled into poverty.

Tiny Titan is the inspirational story of a family’s triumph over adversity. Filled with potholes and miracles, the Yurceks survived by delivering more than half a million newspapers at the crack of dawn for six years.

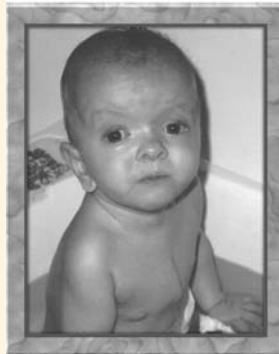
Living on less than \$10,000 a year, Jim went on to graduate from medical school and is now a practicing surgeon.

In return for all the help they received along the way, the family decided to give back by adopting five abused siblings separated in foster care. They fought for resources in child welfare and mental health for their new children with the same tenacity they fought for Becca in the medical world. Many thought their was journey impossible, but the Yurceks proved them wrong.

Tiny Titan was a difficult book for Ann to write. However, she knew her family’s story had to be told. She wrote it to inspire all who face adversity – especially the parents of medically and mentally challenged children. She is now a “Mom Expert” who helps the parents of extraordinary children navigate the government’s medical and mental health care systems.

Contact: Jodee Kulp, 763-531-9548
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Meet the ~~Families~~ Family That Would Not Give Up



*On August 3, 1989, Rebecca Nicole
joined our family and life as
we knew it changed.*

*“One step at a time,
one minute at time,
one second at a time,
was how our family
would survive.”*

Ann Yurcek



For a review copy of *Tiny Titan*,
or arrange for an interview with
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“Becca gave us the gift of learning that loving well today is what truly matters.” — Ann Yurcek

2007 Winner
Mom' Choice Awards
BEST Adult Non-Fiction

2007 FINALIST Your Heart Our Hope

2007 Hollywood Book Festival

HONORABLE MENTION

Recommended by
Midwest Book Watch Health Division
August 2006

CHAPTER NINE - THE CHRISTMAS STORY

to be featured December

NIPPON National Japanese Television

“The World’s Greatest Stories”



MAJOR
PRESENTATIONS

“Co-Piloting for Solo
Flights” -- National Foster
Parent Association
Conference, Washington,
D.C. -- May 2007

“Strategies for Success” --
Courage of a Blue Boy
FASD Conference
St. Paul, MN --
November 2007



The “Yurcek Tribe” Began with One Large, Challenged Family...



Home nursing helped us survive.

Round the clock nursing continued to give the family hope.

Left to Right:

Bottom Row – Ian, Nathan, Marissa

Top Row – Jim, Grandma Zoe, Rebecca, Ann

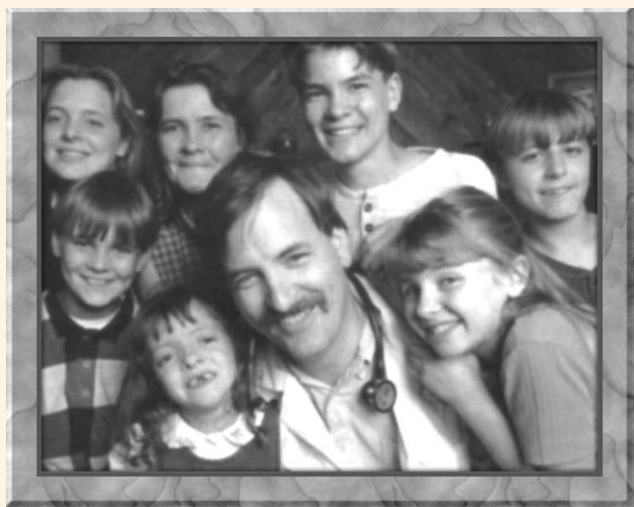
Dr. James Yurcek (1997)

Leaving carpet sales behind, one half million Minneapolis Star Tribune newspapers were delivered to help Jim become a surgeon!

Left to Right:

Bottom Row – Matt, Rebecca, Jim, Marissa

Top Row – Kristy, Ann, Nathan, Ian



Westward Ho

A roadtrip across America including the dog.

Left to Right – Kristy, Ian, Nathan, Matt, Marissa, Rebecca

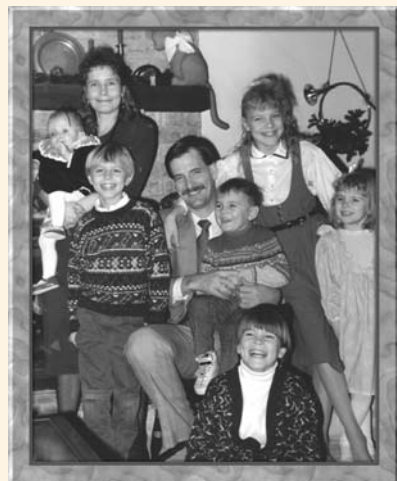


Happy Holidays!

Very Front – Nathan

Middle Row – Ian, Matt on Jim’s lap, Marissa

Back Row – Ann with Rebecca and Kristy

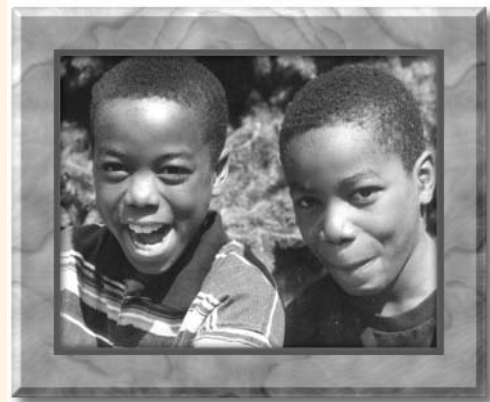


For a review copy of *Tiny Titan*, or arrange for an interview with Ann Yurcek, contact:
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That Met Another Large, Challenged Family.



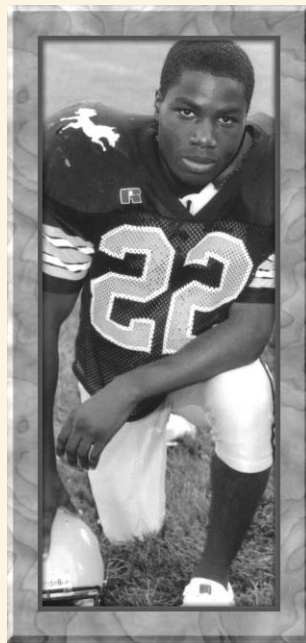
Shay and DJ



Deangelo and Delonzo



DJ graduates!



Delonzo



Detamara

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Together they Successfully Merged Into One Family.



Left to Right – Matt, Matt, Nathan, Ian, Kristy, Deangelo, Marissa, Delonzo, Detamara, Rebecca

Not pictured – DJ and Shay



New Beginnings (1997)

Left to Right: Bottom Row – Rebecca, Detamara, Delonzo, and Deangelo
Top Row – Kristy, Marissa, Nathan, Shay, DJ, Matt, Ian



United We Stand

Left to Right: Bottom Row – Delonzo, Rebecca, Detamara, Deangelo
Middle Row – Matt, Kristy, Ann, Marissa, Shay
Middle Row – Ian, Brian, DJ, Nathan, Jim



A Winning Team

Disney recognized our family's Backpack for Kids project. Left to Right: Bottom Row – Detamara, Rebecca
Top Row – Delonzo, Deangelo

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EXCERPTS FROM TINY TITAN: JOURNEY OF HOPE

- *Compared to my other noisy children, Becca was too quiet and I asked why. The nurse told me Becca was not strong enough to make noise. It required too much energy for her tiny body.*
- *People often wonder how I did it. I did it by savoring the miniscule seconds and moments as if they were weeks and weeks of vacation. My one-minute vacations still get me through.*
- *Perhaps we waited too long before we waved our white flag. It took time for us to lay down our pride. We didn't want help; we wanted to do it by ourselves.*
- *The paper routes were not only a source of income, but also a recyclers dream. Our city's unlimited trash was placed at curbside the night ahead and as we went up and down the streets before dawn, the kids discovered a wealth of treasures..."*
- *My jaw dropped. My heart skipped a beat. I gave Jim a big hug. Jim's hard work had landed him a residency slot in surgery.*

AFTER THE ADOPTION:

- *Shay sat seething at the table and within minutes of Jim's departure she bolted from the table...I was standing near the stairs and I didn't see her coming behind me...I felt myself being lifted off the ground. The metal railing gave way as I went head first over it toward the floor below.*
- *Over time I learned we were not alone in this type of face off. Many a family, teacher, doctor, or social worker who adopted one of the kids from the system had lost their license, career and their other children when they could no longer maintain one of their exceptional children at home. Pre-adoption training didn't tell us adoption might cost us everything.*
- *I got phone calls when Shay went to the time-out rooms and when she needed a doctors appointment. Amazingly they updated us with all the positive things Shay accomplished and kept us connected. Shay advanced through her therapy and skill building at the Manor and in time she would be ready to return to our community.*
- *In the stability of our home, Detamara grew...she was passing her hand-me downs up to her older sister Becca. Three years difference were blended by their differing social and emotional lags... They balanced each other out and learned together. What Detamara forgot, Becca remembered. What Becca could not reach, Detamara helped her get.*
- *Becca is a young woman with untapped abilities. On the other hand, some of my handsome sons with hidden brain damage remain little boys in man-size bodies, needing legitimate support and care. Their path is uncharted.*

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Adoptive Family Wins 2007 Best Adult Non Fiction

by The Mom's Choice Awards - *Tiny Titan* by Ann Yurcek

An extraordinary story of how the power of one tiny child changes the lives of thousands. The Yurceks beat the odds of poverty, despair, unemployment, medical and mental health crisis. They not only survive they triumph. A true story of hope and inspiration.

Lancaster, WI (PRWEB) October 18, 2007 -- Life for the Yurcek's has never been easy and three years ago they faced a crossroad. Yurcek was "just" a mom. But "just a mom" with a story to tell, the mom of a once simple American family. Many encouraged her to write, yet with 11 children, several with special needs, who could find time to write a 470-page memoir?

Ann Yurcek pulled out her journals and paper snippets to finally write "that book!"

"I was called to write our story to educate, inspire, and offer hope," wrote Yurcek and she started by "just beginning".

Tiny Titan (www.tinytitan.org) is filled with miracles and challenges the Yurcek's face when their youngest daughter is born with a severe Noonan's Syndrome and they tumble into catastrophic illness. With five other children and a critically ill baby the family beats the odds of families in crisis, they unite and teeny-tiny Becca survives as a medical miracle.

Families of children who are critically ill or severely challenged statistically face isolation, hopelessness, divorce, family disruption, bankruptcy and depression. Yurcek vowed to keep the family intact and through job losses, poverty, and adversity the family was not broken. They were strengthened. Faced with a million dollars in medical bills and poverty, Ann encouraged her husband to return to school. They delivered newspapers, took out student loans and accepted help from others. Mr. Yurcek became Dr. James Yurcek, a surgeon. At 18, Becca's congenital heart defects, medical fragility and autism have not prevented her from becoming the manager of the Lancaster High School football team and cheerleader squads.

In return for the graciousness of others, the Yurcek's reunited five America's waiting children siblings who had been separated by the foster care system. Their journey in the health intensive care and medical arena was filled with twists and turns, but was nothing compared to the maze they walk through in the mental health and child welfare system.



-2- Lancaster, WI (PRWEB) October 18, 2007

Yurcek has become a force to reckon with in children's mental health and disability awareness. A mighty mother warrior who began quiet and shy, she now tackles issues in local, state and national systems. "When it comes to my children, I will fight for them when they cannot fight for themselves. If they make a mistake I let them learn from it as they grow from life experience, but sometimes events take an advocate and then they know I am in their corner. I worry for the thousands of young people who struggle like my children and who don't have an advocate.

Yurcek states, "My fight for the life of tiny Becca prepared me to fight for my other five children. Becca's physical issues are visible to the public, whereas our new children have invisible disabilities - brain injury, attachment issues, sensory issues, post traumatic stress from abuse and neglect, mental health complexities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The community cannot see their internal struggles and some are more debilitating than Becca's for quality of adult life."

The mission of the Mom's Choice Awards (MCA) is to recognize authors, inventors, companies, parents and others for their efforts to create quality family-friendly media, products and services.

"Can you believe it?" said Yurcek, "Recipient of Best Adult Non-Fiction of Mom's Choice Award and Finalist in Your Heart Our Hands for philanthropic spirit." The family continues to pay the generosity others gave them forward. "When you've been at the bottom, choosing not to eat so your children are fed, you know how important a hand up can be." The Yurcek family founded the award winning Backpacks for Kids program in Kalamazoo, Michigan and collected and delivered over 4,500 filled backpacks to school children. Their project was featured in People Magazine.

"Tiny Titan by Ann Yurcek has brought tears and smiles, hope and laughter. It encourages all who read it. Their story is so complex it sounds fictional, but Yurcek had arm loads of data to prove every bit was true. And she fought for her story with the same tenacity she fought for medical and mental health to provision her children. It was crucial to her that the whole story - three complete separate stories remain intact. It was vital that it was written in "just a mom" vernacular and script. It was pertinent that no embellishment of truth happen," said publisher Better Endings New Beginnings. "Congratulations Yurcek family you represent America at its best. We're glad we resisted all those edits and you stuck to your strategy - telling the public the whole story in your own language."



-3- Lancaster, WI (PRWEB) October 18, 2007

"Instead of reading the most recent fiction novel to fill your spare time with unbelievable characters, plot twists and outrageous emotions, read this novel that will provide you with the same feelings with one twist, it is true. I did not know what to expect from this book, but what I was given was amazing. I have never felt more attached to a story and the people that told it. With each turn of the page, I realized how inspirational it was. The obstacles that the Yurcek family faced are obstacles I could not begin to understand, and their ability to overcome made me realize how truly strong people can be. I would recommend this book to anyone, and in fact it has already been passed through my circle of friends. If you are facing hardship or would just like to be inspired by truth and strength of spirit, Tiny Titan is a wonderful choice." writes Jennifer Manogue on www.Amazon.com

"We're delighted with the outstanding works represented in this very special group of recipients," said Tara Peterson, founder of the Mom's Choice Awards (www.momchoiceawards.com). Recipients are profiled in a special limited edition of Entro produced exclusively for the Mom's Choice Awards. The publication and Tiny Titan is available online at Amazon.com. Visit www.tinytitan.org to learn more about the Yurceks.

#



Tiny Titan Rings Out Warnings of the Realities of Fetal Alcohol

Recommended by Midwest Book Watch Health Division August 2006

Chosen as one of five health books for Midwest Bookwatch, Diane C. Donovan of California Bookwatch writes, "In 1989 the author's sixth child Becca was born with a rare genetic disorder, driving her parents into poverty as they struggled with medical bills and despair. Their journey for financial and health answers would lead to the adoption of five siblings separated in foster care, and a newfound battle for resources in mental health. TINY TITAN: JOURNEY OF HOPE will find many audiences and it's autobiographical account of a struggle is truly inspirational."

(PRWEB) August 28, 2006 -- Bells will ring out across the world beginning in New Zealand on September 9, 2006 as thousands of individuals affected with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), and their parents, caregivers and professionals work to build awareness of this lifelong disability. On the magical moment of 9:09 am chosen to represent the nine months of a sober pregnancy bells will ring on the hour from Australia to South Africa, from the cathedrals of Germany to the shores of Ireland, and across the expanse of the Atlantic to the forests of Canada and the rural plains of the Midwest. Church bells, hand bells, and cowbells will ring out warnings of the dangers of consuming alcohol while pregnant. Ann Yurcek, author of Tiny Titan, A Journey of Hope and her family will be among those planning to ring in awareness of FASDs.

The general term for FAS/FAE and related disorders is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and the physical characteristics may not be obvious, but FAS is nonetheless a cause of mental retardation, attention deficit disorder, developmental delays, learning disabilities and behavior disorders. As they grow, children with FASDs encounter mental health problems, difficulty in school and experience trouble with the law. Doctors can diagnose FAS by noting the history of maternal drinking and by observing slow growth, abnormal facial features and central nervous system problems (such as lower IQ, attention problems and developmental delays). The term fetal alcohol effects (FAE) is used when children lack the full set of physical abnormalities seen in FAS.



-2- (PRWEB) August 28, 2006 --

In her book, Yurcek uncovers the root cause of the troubles her newly adopted children face. The adoption agency's promise of children with limited mental health issues falls through her hands like sand in the wind, as her children who look normal struggle to remember, understand or behave. Prenatal alcohol exposure is a primary factor in placing children in state care and a significant number of children with FASDs are placed in domestic adoptions. For international adopters, FASDs are a special concern in countries of high alcohol consumption, such as Russia and countries of Eastern Europe.

The brain damage her children incurred before birth was invisible and though each child spoke well and appeared well mannered on initial appearance, the reality of their disabilities became apparent over time as ill-informed opinions and misunderstandings lead to trouble both at school and home. The Yurceks soon discover that their newly adopted family does not have the capacity to think or remember like their other children. They have difficulties perceiving similarities and differences. They cannot generalize and make associations, or compare and contrast, and they have difficulties with patterns, sequences and judgments. They have problems with emotions. They have difficulties translating hearing into understanding, thinking into saying, reading into speaking and feelings into words. They could not tell the time and could get lost if left alone.

Undaunted, Yurcek sets out to understand what is behind her new children's struggle. She learns from the oldest children that their birth mother drank alcohol while pregnant with the youngest children and begins studying fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). She discovers it is not 'just' her children who are affected, but over 40,000 babies born in the United States each year with this lifelong disability. The economic and social impact is enormous. She is shocked to learn that "more children are born with FASDs than the combined number of babies born with muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, HIV infection and Down's Syndrome, that the statistic is rising and it is 100% preventable."



-3- (PRWEB) August 28, 2006 --

Many women drink when they are pregnant and others drink not knowing they are pregnant. Some drink to celebrate pregnancy. Others drink because they think that the risk is minimal, but drinking while pregnant can cause problems to the unborn baby. The degree of knowledge today can be compared to understanding of the effects of tobacco in the 1950s. The reality is that a pregnant woman who drinks runs the risk of alcohol crossing her placenta and entering the body of her unborn child. At early stages in its development, the fetus will have only a rudimentary liver, which cannot filter alcohol out of the body. That is the stage when the baby is most vulnerable, but even as the pregnancy develops and the organs become better formed, the exposure remains.

How badly the baby is affected depends on many factors, including when during pregnancy the woman drank and the pattern of alcohol abuse. The baby is born with physical and mental defects, and behavioral disabilities. An unborn child is bathed in alcohol when a pregnant woman drinks. Alcohol in the body of the fetus robs the brain of oxygen, destroys brain cells, and retards the growth of other organs. The brain suffers from incomplete development, which will permanently affect the body of the baby from birth. This affects the child's growth, damages the brain's wiring and alters body development. The effects last for life.

Kelly Mayr of Colorado writes, "If you are going to read only one book this year, this is the book to read! Tiny Titan chronicles the journey of the Yurcek family. It goes through Becca's medical struggles with Noonan syndrome and how that changes a family. It is an inspiring look into a regular family thrust into extraordinary circumstances. Instead of getting bogged down by the overwhelming issues they face, they triumph. This book makes you laugh, cry and best of all want to be a better person."

Tiny Titan is available at Amazon and leading booksellers.

###



From 'Just' a Mom to 'Warrior' Mom

Book review of *Tiny Titan*

by Susan Rose,

President of the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Support Network

of New York City & L.I.

“I’m just a mom”, says Ann Yurcek at the beginning of her inspiring book *Tiny Titan*. But after reading about all the obstacles that this mother has had to fight to help her children, the reader is in awe of Ann and knows that “This is no ordinary mom”. *Tiny Titan* is filled with treasures to uplift those who have been challenged or overwhelmed by life. Through adversity we watch Ann, her husband, and her children become wiser and stronger. Yurcek’s gift to us is to share her insights so that we, too, have the opportunity to gain wisdom, to become more deeply spiritual, and to make a difference.

The first part of *Tiny Titan* is entitled: “The Miracle”. It is about Ann’s baby ‘Becca’ and the emotional rollercoaster involved in caring for a critically ill child. Any family that has cared for a child who is critically ill or severely mentally ‘challenged’ has experienced much of the darkness that accompanies that prognosis: divorce, bankruptcy, welfare, depression, family disruption, hopelessness, and isolation. The Yurceks are not spared many of these ‘secondary disabilities’ that accompany having a critically ill child. However, Ann Yurcek is no ordinary mom. She not only fights for Becca’s life, but also creatively keeps her family intact. She battles the many systems that are supposed to help her to keep Becca alive, not oppose her. Yet, whenever Ann loses a battle or feels powerless, someone in her life provides a miracle. ‘Angels’ keep appearing in her life in the form of a nurse, a special doctor, a friend, an anonymous Santa Claus, a mentor, a pastor, church members, or grandparents.

Ann evolves from a ‘just a mom’-- who thinks that the professionals know more than she does-- to a ‘warrior parent’—who becomes a medical expert about her child’s condition and fights to get whatever Becca needs to survive.



As Ann says, “They [doctors] read the charts while we read the children”. But Ann recognizes that even her warrior spirit is not enough for Becca and the rest of her family to survive. Life becomes so overwhelming that Ann finally surrenders her impossible situation to her Creator. She is now on a spiritual journey that will impact both her and her family. By the end of the *Tiny Titan*, Ann acknowledges that “Talking to God had become a normal part of who I am... whether Becca lives or dies is in God’s hands”. Her spiritual transformation empowers her to deal with the ceaseless crises that have become a way of life for her and the entire family.

Part Two of *Tiny Titan* is entitled “Miracles By the Dozen”. This ‘warrior mother’ has learned from her experience with Becca that is a privilege to allow people the gift of giving. Now she wants to fulfill her dream of adopting a needy child so that she can give back. Ann, with the support of her husband (who at this point should be awarded sainthood), feels called to adopt ‘the family no one wants’ ...all six of them! But by this time Ann is no longer a rookie mom. She is on her way to becoming an ‘expert mom’. Her husband Jim, who in the previous chapter has lost his job in the carpeting business because of the family’s situation, is miraculously on his way to become a surgeon. Her biological children are mature beyond their years and have a vision of their own. Ann’s six children have learned from their mom how to turn life into an art. They have seen the healing power of a sewing machine that can magically turn used clothes into fashion statements. They, too, have learned how to transform someone else’s cast-aways into a beautiful gift. Through financially helping the family survive, her biological children have all learned a strong work ethic.

But the newly adopted six children do not know about ‘family’. Life for the Yurceks is about to turn into chaos with no help from the system that first lied to the Yurceks by telling them that these foster children posed no danger to their biological children. Then the system broke promises of services to help them with their adopted children. All of her newly adopted children had been traumatized emotionally. In addition, all six of the children are victims of in-utero exposure to alcohol. They all have fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. The ‘warrior mom’ now has to battle a whole new system: the fragmented, bureaucratic Mental Health Care System. So, Ann learns how to navigate this broken bureaucracy, which is as disabled as her adopted children.



B O O K R E V I E W

We now have Ann Yurcek, the 'Expert Mom', who has much to teach all of us. She tells us: "Little is gained out of easy times; only the hard truths make real change". The hard truth? "We as a society are not giving our children with extraordinary gifts and challenges the support to be successful". The system sets up families, who want to help needy children, to fail. She challenges the existing mindset of people without disabilities who make decisions 'for us not with us'.

The Yurcek family is a success story. But *Tiny Titan* is not the end of Ann Yurcek's vision. She and her children have already made progress in changing the 'system' in their state. Some other states are beginning to make changes in their medical, mental health, and foster care systems as a result of Ann Yurcek's efforts. It is now up to us to follow her example. Take the first step. Read *Tiny Titan*. Begin a journey that has the ability to enrich and empower all of us.