

# FOR SIBLINGS ONLY

Fall, 2007

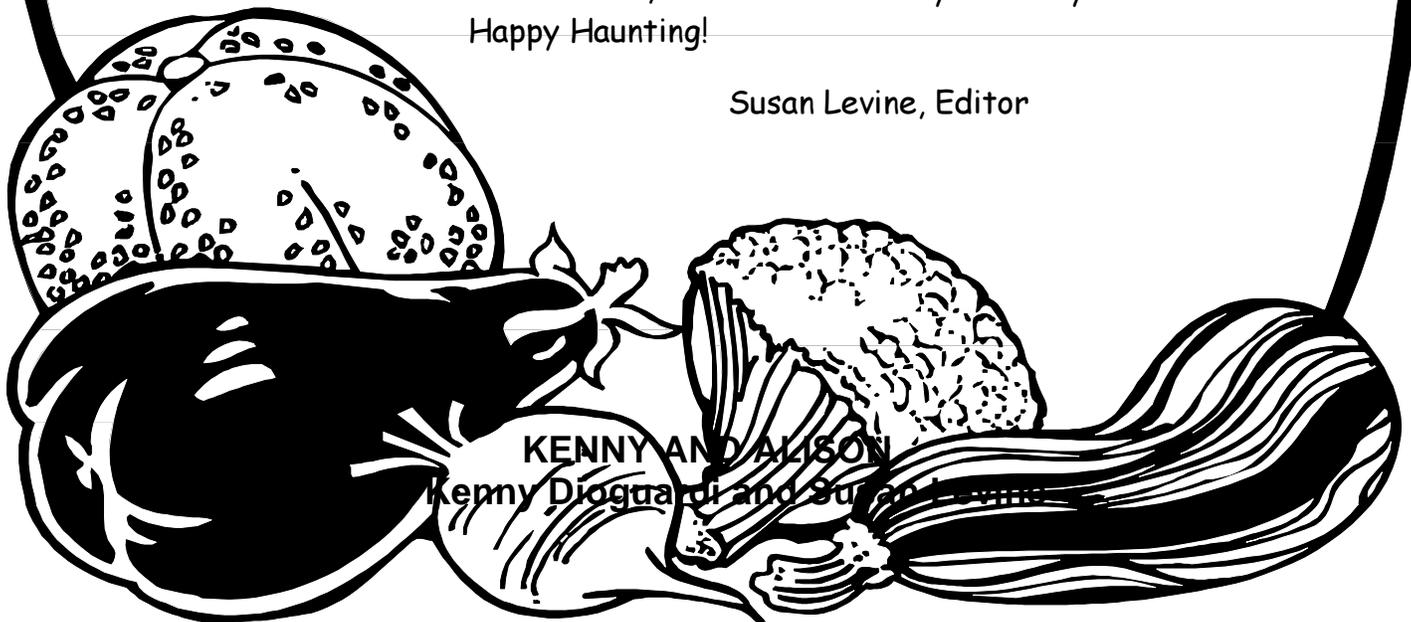
## FROM THE EDITOR:

Here is another issue of *For Siblings Only*, a newsletter written just for YOU, and other children who have a brother or sister who have a disability or trouble learning. This month's story was written almost 6 years ago by Kenny Dioguardi who was then 5 years old. He was just about to begin kindergarten, and his little sister was only 2 years old. Even though she was only 2, she needed to go to "school" for help with learning. But mostly, Allison's teachers came right to their home! Kenny had lots to say about his sister. I think you'll enjoy his story!

What do you think of when you think of Fall? Besides school, and soccer games, baseball playoffs and football, I think about pumpkins, colorful leaves, Halloween fun, trick-or-treating and turkey! What is your favorite thing about the Fall? If you like all the things that go along with Halloween, check out the fun activities in *Brother/Sister Things To Do*.

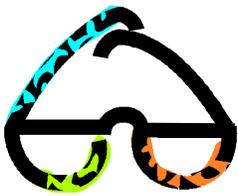
And take a minute or two and write to *For Siblings Only*. Next month, we'd like to share your story!  
Happy Haunting!

Susan Levine, Editor



KENNY AND ALISON  
Kenny Dioguardi and Susan Levine

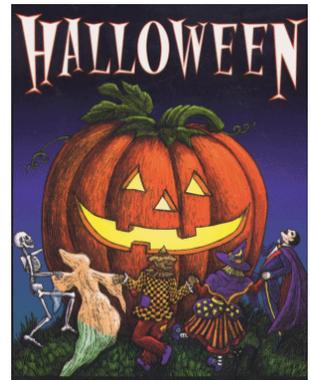
Hi everyone! My name is Kenny Dioguardi and I am 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  years old. In September, I started kindergarten. There are many things I like to do. I like to play Sega and Gameboy, computer games and board games too. I love going to school and camp. Rollerblading and swimming are two more of my favorite things. I live in New Jersey with my Mom, my Dad, and my little sister Alison who is 2 years old. She is not in school yet, but she spends a lot of time going to doctors and therapists who try to help her. Alison can sit really well and she likes to make sounds, but she can't walk, crawl, or talk, and she has trouble playing with her toys by herself. She was born with her problems and the doctors don't even know why. The doctors and therapists try to help her by exercising her and giving Mom ideas of things to do with her at home. When I go to the doctor for a cold or because of my allergies, the doctors can give me medicine to help me get better. The doctors can't fix Alison's learning problems just with medicine. It's not that easy at all! Alison doesn't mind going on all those doctor's visits. I don't really mind seeing the doctor either but I wish neither one of us had to get shots! Ouch!



Alison's favorite things to do are wear her glasses, chew on her glasses, and play with her new bear toy. Alison has a really cool pair of glasses called prisms that she seems to like. When I try them on, I see rainbows of colors! The glasses change what she is seeing and makes it more interesting! My sister may have trouble learning and playing with toys, but there is one thing that she is even better than me at. She is really a great eater! She eats whatever my Mom gives her - including all that food that is good for you! I don't like some of those things, but I really love junk food. That is my favorite! I do like to try new things though, like lettuce and red potatoes.

I like to help with Alison sometimes. When she is wearing her regular glasses, I hold a toy up in front of her so she will reach for it. I also show her how her toys work. Sometimes I hold her bottle so Alison can drink, or hold her while Mom goes to get something. My favorite thing to do with Alison is listen to stories while Mom reads to us. That is special time for all three of us.

I feel bad that Alison has trouble learning and I wish she didn't have those problems any more. If she were able to do all the things that other children her age could do, it would be a lot more fun.



Right now, I can only play by myself or with my Mom or Dad. If Alison was fine, I could play with her too. When she is three, or maybe when she is even older, she might learn to walk. If she never does, I guess she will have to crawl or be carried her whole life. Or maybe she could use a wheelchair or a special walker to help her get around. But however Alison will be, I will always love her very much.

## FOCUS ON FEELINGS:

Kenny told us such a great story about all the things that he and his sister like to do. Kenny likes all kinds of games and he loves going to school and camp. He is really good at rollerblading and playing his Sega game. And his sister Alison is really good at eating all the foods that are good for you! Even though she has trouble learning, this is something that she does even better than Kenny!



Alison is lucky to have such a helpful big brother. I think she must like it when Kenny plays near her or shows her toys to look at. I think she probably even likes listening to Kenny talk and run around the house! Sharing a special story time with Mom is something that they both like to do too. Alison smiles when she is happy, but she can't talk to tell Kenny that she likes to play with him. If she could talk though, I think that is just what she would say!

Kenny wishes Alison was a better playmate for him. She can't really play the way another two-year-old would. He wishes she didn't have any learning problems or disability so they could have more fun playing together. Kenny is lucky though. He has a lot of friends right in his neighborhood and in his school too. There is even a girl right next door who also has a sister with a disability. Kenny gets to spend a lot of time with his friends and that is a good feeling!

Kenny likes to know what Alison and Mom are going to be doing for the day when he goes off to school. He knows that they have many therapy appointments and many doctor's visits. Kenny also knows that Alison's visits to the doctor are usually different than his visits to the doctor. When you are sick with a cold, a sore throat, an ear infection or even a fever, the doctor can listen to your heart, look in your throat and ears, and give you medicine to help you get well. When Kenny goes

to the doctor, that is usually what the visits are like. When a child is born with learning problems or a disability, there is no medicine that the doctor can give to make those problems go away. There is no cure for learning problems. When Alison goes to the doctor for her disability, the doctor will look in her eyes, watch how she tries to hold a toy and checks how well she is sitting. They may have special X-rays or blood tests done to get a better idea of how Alison's body is working. The doctors can give Kenny's Mom and Dad ideas of things to do at home. They might even suggest a medicine to help with a medical problem. But they cannot make the disability go away. Kenny wishes the doctors and the therapists could do more to make his sister better, but he knows that they and his parents are doing whatever they can to make sure she is able to be the best that she can be.

When Kenny thinks about what Alison will be able to do when she gets older, he hopes that she will be able to walk. But if she can't, he knows that there will always be people to help her. And most of the time, he will love her, no matter what happens.



Does your brother or sister who has trouble learning go to the doctor often? Do you wonder about what your sibling will be like when he gets older? Then, you probably feel a lot like Kenny does! If you have questions about your brother or sister's doctor's visits, or about what he or she will be able to do in the future, be sure to ask Mom or Dad. They can tell you more and make you feel more comfortable.

Thank you, Kenny, for sharing your very special story with the readers of **For Siblings Only!** We learned a lot about you and Alison too!



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## BROTHER/SISTER THINGS TO DO:

The Fall is a great time to do craft projects, especially if they have something to do with Halloween! Here are two fun ideas for activities you can do with your brother or sister. Be sure to talk to Mom or Dad about the ideas. They can help you set things up so it will be the most fun for both of you!

**1.) Pumpkin Painting:** Pumpkins are a part of fall and a part of Halloween too. Of course, pumpkins are fun to carve for Halloween night, but they are fun to paint too! Because this activity might be messy, you and your brother or sister should wear smocks, aprons or clothes that won't be ruined if paint gets on them. Spread newspaper on the floor where you will work, or paint outside to keep things neater. Get at least two big or little pumpkins - one for each of you. To decorate, use poster paints and paintbrushes, or magic markers. You can also use some cut out construction paper shapes to add details to your pumpkin. You can make pumpkins that look like this:



Another good idea is to paint a whole pumpkin purple and add eyes to make it look like Barney! You can even scribble all over the pumpkin, making squiggles, circles and other shapes for a crazy pumpkin look. Help your brother or sister if she needs help. Show her how to color inside a shape you draw or let her copy what you do on her own pumpkin. Make sure that the marker or paints are used only on the pumpkin and not on the floor, faces or mouths!

Since painted pumpkins last a lot longer than cut pumpkins, you can use your painted pumpkins as decorations for your Halloween or Thanksgiving table. Several tiny painted pumpkins or gourds can hold place cards for the table too.

**2.) Ripped paper art:** Many young children like to rip paper. It's fun to do when you're older too!

Small pieces of colored ripped paper can make a fun craft project. For a Halloween picture, rip sheets of orange and black construction paper into small pieces. For a fall or Thanksgiving project, use brown, orange, green and yellow construction paper.



Rip the paper into small and larger pieces if you want. After ripping the paper, spread nontoxic glue all over one side of two paper plates, one plate for you and one for your sibling. Stick the pieces of colored paper all over the plate. You can put them anywhere on the plate or you can make a design like a pumpkin face or a tree. When the first side is dry, you can flip the plate over and decorate the other side. Let your brother or sister do as much as he can by himself. Help if you need to. Talk about the colors and the designs you are making. When you're all finished, punch a hole in the top of the plate and thread a piece of yarn or string through the hole and tie the ends together. Use the yarn or string to hang up your decoration for everyone to enjoy!



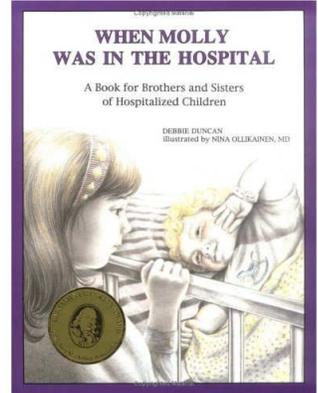
## LET'S VISIT THE LIBRARY:

Do you like to read or look at books with mom or dad? Do you like to go to the library or bookstore to find interesting books? The next time you go, you might want to look for one of these good books! If you or your brother or sister was ever in the hospital, or if they will be soon, this first book might be a just right for you....



***WHEN MOLLY WAS IN THE HOSPITAL* by Debbie Duncan, 1994.**

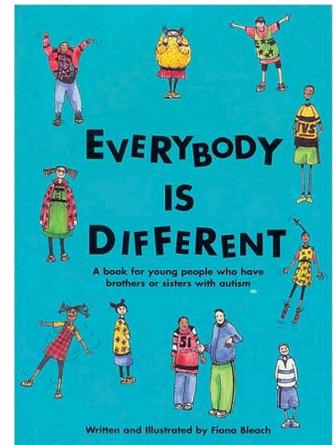
Anna's little sister, Molly, has been very sick and had to have an operation. Anna tells the reader what it was like for her when Molly was so sick. At first, Anna was unhappy and angry that Molly was getting all the attention. Later, she worried that she made her sister sick! Molly has lots of different feelings including guilt, anger, and happiness when Anna gets better. All the feelings Molly feels are okay and are part of what it really feels like when a sister or brother gets so sick.



And, if you ever wanted to learn more about autism, this book will answer some of your questions....

***EVERYBODY IS DIFFERENT: A BOOK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE A BROTHER OR SISTER WITH AUTISM*, by Fiona Bleach, Autism Asperger's Publishing Company, 2001.**

"Everybody is Different" is a book that gives answers to many questions about a brother or sister who has autism. There are also many helpful suggestions for how to make things go smoothly in the family with a difference. Brothers and sisters reading this book will feel more comfortable with what they know about autism. Siblings older than age 7 will enjoy reading this book!



 **SPECIAL DEFINITIONS:**

**TUBEROUS SCLEROSIS:**

Kids who have tuberous sclerosis are born with it, though it may take a while to find the problem. Parents might notice that the baby is slower at learning, or he or

she might begin to have seizures (if you want to know more about seizures, check the Winter, 2007 issue of *For Siblings Only*). People with tuberous sclerosis can have small growths or tumors in different parts of their body including the brain, heart, kidneys, eyes, skin and lungs. Not everyone with this condition has tumors in every one of those places! In fact, they might just have some in one or two places. Most children do have these tumors in their brains - this causes them to have seizures and slower learning. Most children also have tiny ones under the skin on their faces or other parts of their bodies. They look like tiny bumps, or even small freckles. If there are a lot of tumors in places like the heart and kidneys, the child might have other medical or health problems. Some kids have very mild problems and you might not even know that anything is different about them. Other children have very big problems and have a lot of trouble learning. And some kids are in between! Every child with tuberous sclerosis is different and every child can keep on learning.

## OME THOUGHTS FROM YOU:

In the last issue of the newsletter, we asked our readers some questions! Here are some of the answers we received. Read the questions and answers, and think about what your answer would be!

1.) My favorite thing to do in the summer is:

- Have sleepovers with my friends
- Jump off the diving board at the pool
- Go to the beach

2.) My brother or sister's favorite thing to do in the summer is:

- Play video games and do sports
- Go fishing
- Wander off places



Thank you to **Danny Baker, Mara Grubaugh** and **Emily Geoffroy**  
for answering these questions!



## ALLING ALL KIDS:

Just like Kenny, Danny, Mara, and Emily, you can be the star of the next issue of *For Siblings Only!* You can always send us your very own story about you and your brother or sister who needs extra help to learn. But you can also answer the questions here and send them in to the newsletter! You can mail your answers to: For Siblings Only, 35 Haddon Ave., Shrewsbury, NJ 07702, or you can e-mail the answers to [slevine@frainc.org](mailto:slevine@frainc.org). We will share your thoughts with our readers, and you will see your name in the newsletter. You can show your family, teachers and friends! You'll be famous! So what do you think?



What kind of a learning problem does your sister or brother have?

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What does he or she have the most trouble doing?

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What don't you understand about your brother or sister's disability or learning problem?

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If you could tell your whole school or neighborhood one thing about your brother or sister, what would it be?

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Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Your brother or sister's name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for reading *For Siblings Only!* And thank you for writing to the newsletter too! Look for the next issue of *For Siblings Only* in 2008 in your mailbox or on line at [www.frainc.org](http://www.frainc.org) (click on newsletters and then on *For Siblings Only*, Fall 2007.)

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Shrewsbury, NJ 07702  
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