

Cynthia S. Kidder

Founder, Band of Angels Foundation

Cynthia S. Kidder is a national advocate for educating and employing children with Down syndrome and other special needs. She is the founder of Band of Angels, a national outreach organization dedicated to helping children with Down syndrome and other disabilities reach their full potential. Under Ms. Kidder's direction, Band of Angels publishes high-end stationery products, developmental calendars and books celebrating life with Down syndrome. Band of Angels also serves as a resource for parents seeking information, guidance and counsel on educational and employment issues and opportunities for children with Down syndrome and other special needs.

Ms. Kidder is the mother of three sons. Her youngest son, Jordan, was born with Down syndrome in September of 1989. In 1991, Ms. Kidder, a former sales executive and national account manager with Sprint, applied her sales savvy and marketing skills to create Kidder Resources, a private sector employment agency solely dedicated to finding career opportunities for persons with disabilities. The motivation behind this endeavor was twofold: first, to provide more meaningful employment for persons with differences than was currently available in the marketplace. Secondly, Ms. Kidder wanted to acknowledge and thank the parents of special needs children, now adults, who had gone before and paved the way for the academic liberties that Jordan is able to enjoy. Because of the concerted initiatives of these parents of young persons with Down syndrome and other disabilities, Ms. Kidder was able to enroll her son in school knowing he would be in a positive, inclusive academic environment.

In its four year existence, Kidder Resources placed 32 persons with varying disabilities in occupations throughout the metropolitan Detroit area. Many still contact Ms. Kidder today to update her on their career progress and successes. One of the chief lessons Ms. Kidder learned from Kidder Resources, however, was that the corporate world was not quite ready for special needs children to integrate into the workplace. It was this lesson, though, that inspired her to literally start at the beginning.

In 1994, Ms. Kidder established Band of Angels and published the first *Beautiful Faces* calendar to visually help persons throughout America see and appreciate children with Down syndrome 365 days a year. To Ms. Kidder, these photographs of children with Down syndrome celebrating the everyday joys of life served as an initial foundation on which future community and employer acceptance could be built.

Twelve calendar years later, *Beautiful Faces* calendars and other products are displayed and used in homes, hospitals, schools and corporate executive offices throughout the world. Band of Angels has spread a positive and informed message to more than 40,000 families, not only through the *Beautiful Faces* calendar, but with other high-end stationary products, books, and developmental tools. Ms. Kidder's reach also extends to the thousands throughout the country who have heard her personal story and mission or obtained expert advice through her consultation services.

As an advocate, publisher and speaker, Ms. Kidder's strength is her experience-based vision, energy, creativity, and ceaseless devotion to the potential of each differently-abled child. In her own words, Ms. Kidder sums up her philosophy accordingly.

“I have never believed in anything more fervently than the indisputable truth that persons with challenges are whole and valuable people with much to give and much to gain by being part of the world community.”

Cynthia S. Kidder is a native of Brackenridge Pennsylvania and holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Allegheny College in Meadville, PA. She resides in Rochester Hills, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.