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# A MURPHY Thanksgiving

Thanks to the Generosity of *Points North* Readers, **The Murphy Family** and their 18 Adopted Special Needs Children Now Have a New Home

[ WRITTEN BY JULIE HOSTETTER ]

AS A JOURNALIST, there are few stories that stay with you long after the ink is dry and leave you in utter marvel at the generosity and grace of the human spirit. John and Jeanette Murphy are those kind of people, revealing the better angels of our human nature, while providing inspiration and hope where sadly many see none.

You see, John and Jeanette Murphy have dedicated their lives to children that fell through the cracks, abandoned because of their fragile health conditions and sometimes even abused by their former caregivers. Early in life, the Murphys had a passion for working with Down syndrome

patients and became frustrated with the low expectations and coddling that was the norm in many facilities. They believed, if nurtured and encouraged, these children could have a much more productive and happier life. After the birth of their two sons Shawn and Christian, the Murphys decided to make a difference by adopting 23 special needs children. No challenge was too daunting, not Down syndrome, heart defects, cerebral palsy or autism. Even when they had two more natural children, Josh and Bethany, they could never refuse a child in need because there was an endless supply of love in the Murphy home.



Together they faced triumph and tragedy. Most of the children would thrive and surprise doctors with their success, but sadly five of their adopted children would pass away from complications.

That is why their story is coined the Murphy Miracle by so many.

#### **Flashback Three Years**

The first time I had the honor of meeting the Murphy family was three years ago to discuss The Murphy House Project. Founded by Atlanta's premier child advocacy lawyer Don Keenan and his Keenan's Kids Foundation, the charity was initiated to raise \$300,000 for a new home. Rich in love, but not in money, John, a registered nurse, and Jeanette are stay-

at-home parents who depend on Social Security benefits to care for all the children. Due to rising medical costs and personal tragedies, their 40-year-old ranch home was spiraling into disrepair. The heating and cooling systems were at their breaking point, appliances were wearing out, their basement was flooding, and living conditions were unbelievably cramped.

After ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" rejected their nomination for a remodel (instead they chose a family just a few blocks from the Murphy's house) it looked like all hope was lost. Jeanette recalled back then, "The first day I was depressed, but I always tell myself I chose this life. And if this is all we can do, this is all we can do. I know the kids are happy

and that's the most important thing."

Once the story chronicling their plight was published in our November 2006 issue three years ago, I had hoped it would make a difference in the lives of these amazing people. In anyone's wildest dreams, no one could imagine the result.

#### **A Generous Community**

Within a month, *Points North* readers were donating in droves. Some offered their business services or products, others donated financially, and in the end, the road was paved for the groundbreaking for their sprawling new home in McDonough.

"We were just plodding along in the beginning but then we were bombarded with emails and calls; I would

