



**Send a message of love and support the babies!**

Won't you be there for moms like Hana who bravely love and care for our most vulnerable children with special needs? Let's celebrate all the children like Ella who bring us such great joy by challenging us to be our very best selves.

For every \$10 you give, you will receive this beautiful card by a local artist with Down syndrome for a special nurturing person in your life. Just mail the enclosed response note with your gift or order online and we will send your packet right away! Thank you for making your most generous contribution today.



A donation to Friends goes straight to the good work of helping families in crisis. You can help us purchase special equipment, give immediate support to families who must travel for care or endure extended stays in hospitals, provide respite for parents, education to care givers, and host a year full of family events where literally thousands of family members and their special children can relax, have fun, and network with other families.

*Thank You*  
for Your support.



*Friends of Tennessee's*  
**BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**Because**  
**Babies**  
**can't wait.**

**helpingbabies.org**

**Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs**  
P.O. Box 544 | Alcoa, TN 37701-0544 | (865) 984-4326

Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs is a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization working to enhance the potential of infants and young children with disabilities by offering support to their families and the early intervention professionals who serve them.

**EXTRAORDINARY**  
**ELLA**



*Friends of Tennessee's*  
**BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

# Dear Friends,

MAY 2026

When Hana was pregnant in 2023, her then four-year-old son, Will, would ask again and again, “Can I talk to the baby, Mama?” And each time he put his lips close to her belly to whisper his secrets, Hana could feel the baby make a joyful leap.

At last, when the big day arrived, labor was progressing smoothly until suddenly -- no heartbeat. The umbilical cord had twisted into a double knot and cut off oxygen. The medical team mobilized to extract the baby quickly, resuscitate and intubate her, and rush her to Neonatal Intensive Care. Her name was to be Ella, which means “light” in Greek, and it would be six dark days of agonizing suspense before Hana could hold her again.

In the NICU, Ella was placed on a cooling mat for 72 hours to reduce the swelling in her brain. It was torture to watch her shaking from the cold. Hana imagined warm blankets of prayers covering her baby during that critical time. When Ella’s body was slowly rewarmed, Hana felt sure that all the blankets of prayer were being absorbed from head to toe and giving her baby the strength to keep fighting. Finally, after 33 long days, Ella was cleared to come home and meet the big brother whose voice she already knew so well.

Ella’s birth trauma left her with cerebral palsy, low muscle tone in her core, and too-high muscle tone in her extremities. She is mostly nonverbal, unable to feed herself, doesn’t crawl or walk, and needs special splints and orthotics for her hands, ankles, and feet.

And yet, she works hard to master skills every day; opening her tightly curled fingers, sitting independently for a few minutes, indicating what she wants by activating buttons on her assistive communication device with a patient and steady eye gaze. Ella loves the pool, her swing, and sharing delightful belly laughs with her brother.

But venturing beyond the loving perimeter of her family was hard. Even preparing to make a simple trip to a pumpkin patch gave Ella such a sensory overload that she cried until she threw up. Her parents wondered if they were ever going to be able to go anywhere.



Then they heard about *Friends of Tennessee’s Babies with Special Needs* and all the fun family activities it offers all year long.

The first outing they tried was a Night at the Smokies baseball game. From the moment they set foot in the stadium and saw the crowd of families who were navigating challenges just like they were, they immediately felt safe, free from judgement, and warmly welcomed. They were able to stay, and it was a beautiful time.

Every activity offered by *Friends* is designed to bring families out of isolation, help them overcome despair, and foster a feeling of pride. Recently, Will (now seven years old) came home from school with a writing sample that says it all: “Dear Sis, I love you.”

Won’t you help us honor exceptional moms like Hana and the families that *Friends* support by acknowledging the special people in your life? For every \$10 you donate, we will give you a lovely greeting card to send to someone who has nurtured you. These beautiful cards are perfect for anyone who makes life better – teachers, coaches, friends, relatives – anyone you appreciate and hold dear. Please give generously and join the circle of *Friends* whose every gift says, “I love you,” to the precious babies we serve.

*Melissa Goin*

Melissa Goin, Chair  
Friends of Tennessee’s Babies with Special Needs



**For 31 years, Friends has offered vital support to around 3,500 young children and babies with special needs in 16 counties in East Tennessee. Here are just some of the many ways we serve these precious young ones:**

- statewide hearing-aid loaner bank
- respite care
- an educational library
- NICU care packages and baby showers
- travel assistance for out-of-area medical appointments
- diapers
- emergency family assistance
- online training modules
- family-friendly events like Zoo Day and a trip to Ripley’s Aquarium

**Send a message of love and support to the babies!**

Won't you please donate to Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs today?



Please make check payable to “Friends of Tennessee’s Babies with Special Needs”  
P.O. Box 544 • Alcoa, TN 37701-0544

**YES! I would like to support babies with special needs and honor the important people in my life.**

I enclose my gift of  \$10  \$20  \$40  \$60  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

For every \$10 you give, we will send one of these beautiful all-occasion cards (Mother’s/Father’s Day, birthday, anniversary, thank you, sympathy, graduation) to send to anyone you want to honor (family, friend, teacher, coach, etc.).  
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

**PLEASE SELECT FROM OPTIONS BELOW**

1. Please send \_\_\_\_\_ cards to the address I have provided below.  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Gift Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_
2. I would like to make a donation without purchasing any cards.
- 3.



My Name: \_\_\_\_\_ My Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ My Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_