

ADVOCATE

THE TESORI FAMILY

Guided by the boundless joy of an extraordinary preschooler, the Tesori family is spreading love in the special needs community.

By Shannon O'Neil | Photography by Daydream Design

It's late Sunday afternoon when Paul Tesori walks up the 18th fairway on the TPC Stadium Course. Up ahead, his boss and close friend, Webb Simpson, is a few strokes away from victory. In his 18th year as a PGA Tour caddy, Paul has seen his share of wins, but this one is different. Approaching the green, Paul spots his children, Alexis and Isaiah, waiting to celebrate. All day, every time he felt overwhelmed, Paul thought about what great wisdom Isaiah would have for him in that moment. "This is fun, Daddy. Chill out, enjoy the ride!"

Four years ago, on a January night, Paul's wife, Michelle, gave birth to their son. For a few seconds, everything was as it should be. Then, in one blink, something went wrong. Isaiah was rushed to Wolfson Children's Hospital where doctors diagnosed him with a dangerous brain bleed. They also informed the Tesoris that their son showed markers for Down's Syndrome, something that had not shown up in any of Michelle's prenatal tests.

As Isaiah fought for his life, the doctors told his parents to call their pastor and prepare for the worst. Long minutes turned hours and days, until finally Isaiah was released from the hospital. "We came home with a healthy boy who happens to have one extra chromosome,"

says Paul, "And it has transformed our household and our hearts forever."

Before Isaiah came along, Paul and Michelle were already making an impact in the community through the **Tesori Family Foundation**. Now, the organization has expanded with new programs designed for children with special needs. "When I started talking to other parents with children who are older than Isaiah, I kept hearing that they felt like they missed the first year of their kid's life being wrapped up in all the worries," says Michelle. "They missed the chance to celebrate the birth of their child."

Hoping to nurture the excitement of a newborn, the Tesoris began putting together custom gift baskets they nicknamed "Buddy Baskets." Since then, 90 local families have received a basket, each containing \$3000 in goodies. Of course, golf had to play a role, too. With support from Tour stars like Webb, Jordan Spieth, and Billy Horschel, the Tesoris launched the All-Star Kids Clinic, providing 25 special needs

kids with golf lessons from the pros. Since its inception, the program has expanded to include clinics in North Carolina and Florida.

"Even though you have battles ahead," says Paul, "and there is always more work to do, know that your child will absolutely make a positive difference in this world."

By the end of 2018, the Tesori Family Foundation will reach a milestone of over \$1 million in goods and services donated. But beyond the dollars they've raised, the most impactful part of the Tesori Family Foundation are the Tesoris themselves. Paul, Michelle, Alexis, and Isaiah are a driving force of positivity and love, as exemplified by their advice to new parents joining the special needs community. "Welcome to the greatest journey you never expected to be on," says Michelle.

"Even though you have battles ahead and there is always more work to do, know that your child will absolutely make a positive difference in this world," says Paul. "Isaiah has taught me more in the last four years than I ever learned before. I'm scared for him, I know he will encounter struggles, but I'm so excited to see the positive impact he will make on others."

www.tesorifamilyfoundation.org

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