Tracie was referred to Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania by her son’s Early Intervention Casemanager at Westmoreland Casemanagement and Supports, Inc. At the time her son was only 6 weeks old and had just started receiving Early Intervention. She indicated that when her son was born it was suggested that he may have a diagnosis of Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21 because of a line on his hand that was a marker of Down Syndrome. But because no other markers were present at the time and there had been no prenatal testing that suggested this diagnosis, no blood test was done at that time. As those early days passed, other markers for Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21 became apparent and he was then tested for Trisomy 21. The blood test confirmed that he did in fact have Trisomy 21. Tracie admitted that the diagnosis was overwhelming, especially after 2 weeks of wondering “does he or doesn’t he”. Now that they had settled into a routine at home, Tracie was ready to connect with other families of children with Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21. Parent to Parent matched her to 2 other mothers who had toddlers with Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21. Tracie indicated that talking to her Peer Supporters was helpful as she was adjusting to caring for her newborn’s special needs.

Ten months later, another parent of an infant diagnosed with Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21 was looking for support. Nicole Zilli, who had matched Tracie with 2 Peer Supporters earlier that year, wondered if Tracie might be interested in offering support to another mom who lived in her area and had a child who was only a few months younger that her son. Nicole called Tracie and asked if she might be willing to offer support to another mom of an infant with Down Syndrome/Trisomy 21. Tracie happily agreed and noted that she still has regular contact with one of her Peer Supporters. Nicole updated Tracie’s information and enrolled her as volunteer Peer Supporter for Parent to Parent. Tracie then reached out to this parent, who was very appreciative of the support and information Tracie was able to provide.

Many of Parent to Parent’s volunteer Peer Supporters have stories similar to Tracie’s. They received support and understand the value of that connection and are willing to pay it forward and volunteer their time to offer support to other families in similar situations.