

# Charleston family beats odds with help from each other and EFMP

**By Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith**

*437 AW Public Affairs*

Seventeen-year-old Magan Bolick's world is filled with darkness and silence. Her family's world is filled with love and adoration for a child who was given a minimal chance of survival.

Magan, who is deaf and blind, was born May 25, 1982 with, what is now known as, Retinopathy of Prematurity. She was placed on oxygen to help with her breathing and doctors believe that's what may have caused her deafness. She spent 21 weeks

in the hospital before being released.

"Magan was born at 26 weeks," said Anne Bolick, Magan's mother, "and the doctors gave her a 10 percent chance of surviving."

Magan beat those odds with the help of her mother and father, Tech. Sgt. Rick Bolick of the 437<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Generation Squadron.

"We didn't realize what a struggle it was to care for her until she was older," said Rick. "When Magan was born, we didn't have time to dwell on the negative. We had a child to raise."

The struggles of raising a profoundly disabled child were made more bearable for the Bolicks with the help of the Air Force Exceptional Family Member Program.

From the beginning, Anne credits the Air Force with helping lift the burden of special programs and medical bills. Rick joined the Air Force delayed enlistment program in June of 1982. He reported to basic training in December of that year.

Though Rick and Anne considered the option of spending a tour overseas, they decided staying in the United

States was best for Magan. They've spent a majority of Rick's career in Texas, arriving at Charleston six years ago.

Charleston has been good about making sure we have what we need," Anne said. "We thought TRICARE would make things harder for us, but it's actually helped."

The Charleston based EFMP has put the Bolicks in touch with specialists and helped get Magan into school.

She attends special education classes at St. Andrews High School on James Island. "She's starting to eat lunch in the lunch room with other students and she's learning about lifestyles," Anne said.

Magan is learning to feed and dress herself, Anne said. The special education class also takes trips to places like the mall, so the students will learn to interact with other people.

"Magan isn't a crowd person," her mother said. "She doesn't care for little people either. She has a hard time trusting smaller people," Anne said. "It's almost like she doesn't believe they're strong enough to help her."

It wasn't until recently that Magan would let her 10-year-

old sister, Brittany, help her and now Brittany jumps at the opportunity.

"I like to feed her," Brittany said.

Brittany also likes to play with her sister. Magan has a waterbed and that's their favorite place to play. "We'll sit on the bed and bounce together to make the bed wavy," Brittany said.

Magan also likes her time alone and doesn't hesitate to let her family know in an instant when she's had enough company. "When she wants to be by herself, she wants to be by herself," Anne said.

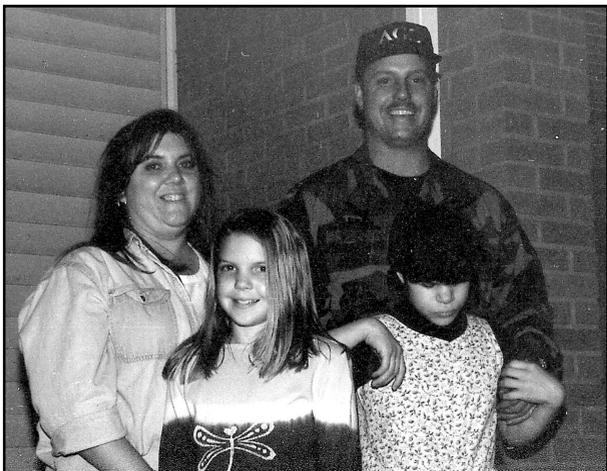
Anne and Rick take their daughters mood swings in stride and enjoy each moment with her. "The odds told us she shouldn't be here with us now, so we see her as a blessing," Anne said.

"We've never asked God why," said Rick, "because we wouldn't change her for anything."

The Exceptional Family Member Program is the Air Force program for adult and child family members with special needs. Whether that need is for special education, unique medical care or other similar needs, EFMP is designed to help the family find and use services in the Air Force and the local community.

Help may include counseling, referral, special assignment consideration and special medical or educational assistance. Enrollment is mandatory.

For more information on EFMP, call 963-6852.



*Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith*

**With help from the EFMP program, Tech. Sgt. Rick Bolick and his wife, Anne, with their children Brittany (left) and Magan, have strived for as normal a life as possible.**