



No Nutty Chickens

M.W. Story 5

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What do Mama Wins mean to me? The first time I heard about the “Mama Wins Project” my mind leapt to times when I have struggled as a mom and thought I just need a Win today, any win no matter how small. I loved reading the Mama Wins stories about “habitual” wins, such as sharing daily thankfurs, responding calmly to your child on their visual level, and setting aside one-on-one time with each child. Those habitual Mama Wins make a huge difference in the moment and as the years go by.

I think it’s important to share our struggles as moms, and equally important to share how we turn struggles into wins. One of my biggest mom struggles is with food allergies. I have 3 girls, Leah (8), Rachel (5), and Hannah (2). All three had bad eczema and cradle cap as infants, but I was shocked when we discovered my third daughter, Hannah, has multiple, severe food allergies. We noticed her eczema improved while I was nursing her when I eliminated nuts from my diet. Her first allergic reaction, however, was to the sesame in hummus at 10-months old. It was terrifying. I gave her a small amount of hummus, and she broke out in contact hives and swelling everywhere it touched (hands and face); I don’t know if it even made it in her mouth. I had never seen an allergic reaction to food before, was home alone with Rachel and Hannah, and had



no emergency medication (epinephrine) at the time. Thankfully, she didn't need it. Fast forward a year and a half, and we now know she is allergic to tree nuts, peanuts, sesame, and eggs, at least. We carry epinephrine autoinjectors everywhere we go. It's a daily struggle, but has resulted in much needed wins, including new friends, supports groups, and extended family and church support. Two examples come to mind: (1) A year ago our extended family participated in the "Food Allergy Awareness Walk" as the team "No Nutty Chickens" (my niece is allergic to chicken). In addition to appreciating the family support, I met a close friend whose 2-yr-old daughter has multiple food allergies, including the ones Hannah has. She is a great listener, empathizer, and source of information. (2) Another example happened after Hannah had hives on her face while playing in our church's "Restless Angels" room, where snacking is common. I contacted a parishioner active in accommodating people with disabilities, and by the end of the day there was a "Nut-Free Zone" sign posted on the room's door. The faith formation classes also stopped serving snacks during Mass, in part to accommodate children with food allergies.

Empowering wins! I'm still afraid: afraid to give her new foods, afraid to leave her, and afraid I'll make a mistake. But, the wins (big and small), prayer, and family support make all the difference.