



Camille Gerald  
Signs  
Camille's Children  
Thirty-One Miracles and Counting

The compelling and heart-warming account of a dream realized. In 1986 Camille and Michael Gerald began adopting children with Down Syndrome. Their dream is to provide a loving, nurturing environment for these special individuals. They have now adopted or have guardianship for over 45 special children and adults, with highly involved medical and physical disabilities. The Geraldis and their volunteers provide a home for these wonderful individuals. Come hear how this remarkable family overcame obstacles through love and hope, when Camille talks about and signs "Camille's Children"

# BORDERS®

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Memphis, Tennessee Author Appearance Confirmation

Author: Camille Gerald

Title(s): 'Camille's Children'

Date: Thursday March 20 Time: 7pm

It is agreed that during this appearance, the Author will: (circle one)

1. sign books. 2. read from & sign books. 3. Lecture/talk about & sign book

Author appearance will last approximately \_\_\_\_\_ hr(s). (1 hr minimum)

Other requirements for author appearance:

1.  Podium/Lectern
2.  Public Address System
3.  Easel/Blackboard
4.  Table for display
5.  Lavalier microphone (clip-on TV type)
6.  Directions to Borders, Germantown (Memphis)
7.  Other (list below)

Additional Requirements: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

[Signature]  
Author/Author Representative

[Signature]  
Borders Community Relations Coordinator

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# Facsimile Cover Sheet

**To:** William Finks  
**Company:** Possible Dream Foundation  
**Phone:**  
**Fax:** 704.389.0250

**From:** Brian J. Hadley, Community  
Relations Coordinator  
**Company:** Borders Books & Music,  
Germantown TN  
**Phone:** 754-0770  
**Fax:** 754-8719

**Date:** 03/07/97

**Pages including this  
cover page:** 2

**Comments:** I can also fax you the press release, if you like, though my assistant turned it in to me this morning, and I have yet to check it for mistakes and accuracy. I will fax it when that has been done.

**Brian**



# Possible Dream Foundation

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P.O. Box 895  
Hayesville, North Carolina 28904

Telephone: 704-389-9555

March 8, 1997

Clara Kirchner  
Madonna Day School  
7007 Poplar St  
Germantown, TN 38138

Ms. Kirchner

On April 20, 1997 Mrs. Camille Geraldi will be autographing copies of her book Camille's Children, Thirty-One Miracles and Counting at Borders Bookstore on Poplar Avenue beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Mrs. Camille is the founder and CEO of the Possible Dream Foundation (formerly known as Up with Down Syndrome Foundation). Camille and her husband, Dr. Michael Geraldi began the foundation in 1986. Their mission is to provide a loving and caring environment for severely mentally, developmentally and physically disabled children and adults; to foster independence by teaching life skills that promote self-sufficiency. The Geraldis currently care for 40 children, many of whom are adopted. The other children and eight handicapped adults are in long term care.

The Possible Dream Foundation provides the following services: medical care, infant stimulation; early intervention; counseling; on the job training for handicapped adults, hospice care for children with terminal genetic disorders, short and long term respite care.

Camille's goal has always been to reach and care for as many special needs individuals as possible. Her book tells her inspiring story of how the foundation began and what life is like for this amazing woman and her children on a day to day basis.

I would like to take this opportunity to issue a personal invitation from Camille to you and your faculty to join her at this book signing. She looks forward to this opportunity to meet you and your staff at the Borders on April 20, 1997.

Sincerely,

William Finks  
Possible Dream Foundation  
PO Box 895  
Hayesville, NC 28904  
email: [possibledream@phoenix.grove.net](mailto:possibledream@phoenix.grove.net)

## **Press Release**

### **Camille Galdi, talks about and signs "Camille's Children"**

Camille Galdi, adopted mother of 38 severely handicapped "special needs" children, will speak about her life experiences, and sign her book "Camille's Children Thirty One Miracles and Counting" at \_\_\_\_\_

Camille's story started in 1975, when the LPN married pediatrician Mike Galdi, whom she met at the hospital where they both worked. Camille's boundless love for children, particularly mentally and physically handicapped kids, prompted the couple to adopt a handicapped child in 1986. To date they have adopted 38 children: most with Down Syndrome, or some other serious mental or physical handicap. They have taken in children who were once destined to live their lives in hospitals or institutions. Several of the kids were simply left on Galdi's doorstep by their natural parents who either could not, or would not deal with the emotional and financial consequences of caring for a handicapped child.

The couple and their children have weathered 1992's Hurricane Andrew, which destroyed their 3-building compound; and angry neighbors who drove them out of their original homes in Miami. They, and most of their children, currently reside in Hayesville, NC. The couple and the foundation that they started, "The Possible Dream Foundation" (previously The Up with Down Syndrome Foundation), pays staffers and the huge expense of caring for the children. All proceeds from the book, co-written by Carol Burris, are contributed to the Foundation.

For additional information, call Joeta Youngblood at 704-389-9555.

# **There Are MIRACLES...**

**Meet the Author  
Camille Gerald**

**as she speaks and signs**

**Camille's Children:  
Thirty-One Miracles and  
Counting**

**Thursday, May 8**

**6:30 pm**

**Camille Gerald and her husband have  
adopted 31 children-many with Down's  
Syndrome. This is a special story.**

# Camille's Children

By John Parenti  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami

Camille Gerald sits in her back yard and is greeted by her children, each wanting a hug and kiss. All 41 of them.

Most of the children are retarded. Many are in wheelchairs. Some are disfigured. These are children who couldn't be cared for by their biological families or were simply unwanted — except by Camille and her husband, Dr. Michael Gerald, a pediatrician.

For more than a decade, the couple has tried to create a nurturing home for their adopted disabled children in a suburb south of Miami. Home has grown to a three-house compound. But vandalism, snide comments from strangers and the endless calls and letters have taken their toll.

Police say they have been called to the homes 13 times in the past five years, and the Geraldts say they haven't reported every incident. Acid was poured on one staffer's car, wheelchairs have been smashed and eggs thrown. The Geraldts are fed up. They're moving to a small town in North Carolina where they feel more welcome.

"I'm very wiped out," Camille Gerald says. "I'm tired of the hang-ups and with people making comments on the phone. The worst thing we get here is, 'Get out of the neighborhood. We don't want you here. Why did you have to ruin the community?'"

The Geraldts are slowly moving their family to a 25-acre spread in Hayesville, N.C., just across the Georgia line. They plan an arts and crafts center and a flea market around the doctor's new pediatric practice. "We are building an entire community where they will be able to work, be productive, live and go to school," Mrs. Gerald says. "They will be able to be independent, but able to come home to their family and friends."

President George Bush named Mrs. Gerald one of the nation's "Points of Light" in 1991. Besides taking care of her children, she runs the Up With Down Syndrome Foundation.

"She has done an exemplary job," says Anita Beck, Dade County director for the state Department of Children and Families. "Those children are very complex to take care of. We are sorry she is leaving the state, but we will continue to have a relationship with her."

While the Geraldts are moving out of Florida, they plan to continue to use the compound as a place where dis-

*To escape harassment, Miamians are moving their brood of 41, most with disabilities, to North Carolina*



abled youngsters can live and as a home for some of their more critically ill adopted children who can't make the move.

"We are expanding our services because there is such a great need," Mrs. Gerald says. "We're not running away. But we have children who can't move, children without an esophagus and twins with leukemia. We have children no one would take."

Stuart Reisman, 49, who lives next door, says he has never complained about the Geraldts, though he is concerned about the effect on property values in the quiet community.

"I do believe what she has done is an important thing, but she's moved beyond that," Reisman says. "I think 'Points of Light' are wonderful, but I don't want a point of light on a stick in my eye."

Ruth Ann Kamer, an Up With Down Syndrome director whose car got the acid treatment, believes the Geraldts are the target of an organized campaign. "There have been too many

incidents for it to be a coincidence," she says.

Things got so bad that Gerald hired two bodyguards to protect his wife. He says the couple plans to continue to use the homes to take care of unwanted children, nothing more. Some neighbors fear other uses for the compound, such as a halfway house for drug addicts.

"People in general are just ignorant of what we are doing," says Gerald, 53. "Even my own medical colleagues thought at first that I would make these children normal through vitamin therapy."

After marrying in 1975, the Geraldts enjoyed an upper-class life with their two healthy daughters, Renee and Jaclyn. Yet, a big house with a pool and even a Porsche, long gone, did not fulfill them.

They adopted a deaf, retarded infant in 1985. Two months later, they adopted another, then another.

The couple has adopted 13 children, 28 children and adults are awaiting



A daily chore: Eight-year-old Adelle Gerald helps brother Jose, 12, with lunch at their home in Miami. Jose has spina bifida.

formal adoption or are under legal guardianship, and paperwork is about to begin on three more.

On a recent day, as the Geraldts prepared to load most of their brood aboard a camper and a bus bound for North Carolina, the children enjoyed one more lunch at home.

There was Jose, 12, a gregarious young man afflicted with spina bifida; Jahida, 3, severely disabled by meningitis; and Vicky, 26, retarded and born without a face. And there were numerous children and adults with Down syndrome, from 16-month-old Shantel to 30-year-old Wendy.

The older ones help take care of the younger and the more disabled. Mrs. Gerald runs her household strictly, often sleeping no more than two hours a night.

"What I do works," she says. "You see a whole bunch of children here conducting themselves perfectly. I will take my children and match them up against any normal children."

The children are taught to pick up after themselves — a trick that many parents with healthy children would love to master. All go to school.

"Whether it's an adult she is working with or a newborn, the woman is spectacular," Kamer says. "She walks into the room and is mommy for every child."

Still, people have accused the Geraldts of ulterior motives and trying to make money off their adopted children. Dr. Gerald's practice pays most of the bills, he says. Diapers alone cost \$10,000 in 1996. But life for the Geraldts isn't easy.

Things may be different in North Carolina. Jennifer Harbell, 27, a nursing student in Hayesville, says she doesn't understand why Miamians have had a problem with the family.

"I would say that 99 percent have welcomed them here with open arms," she says. "This is your typical Southern town, where if you need a cup of sugar, your neighbor will give it to you."

Some of the Geraldts' new neighbors objected at first, but they turned out to be recent transplants — from Florida. Longtime residents shouted down opponents at a town hall meeting.

And how different is Hayesville from Miami?

Mrs. Gerald took some of her children to a Wal-Mart store during a recent visit. As a woman approached her, she braced for a reproach. Instead, the Carolinian welcomed the family and soon many in the store were doing the same. "People were coming up and kissing and hugging me," she says. "The locals in North Carolina have been very receptive and wonderful for us."