

## The Rodgers Family



Married musicians John and Elizabeth embraced their ministry in rural Mexico and were eagerly expecting their first child. But baby Daniel rushed into this world as a 1 pound 15 ounce micro preemie. He began the first part of his improbable journey lurching and racing for hours by outdated ambulance to a hospital on rough roads.

Parenthood arrived like a hurricane, thrusting Elizabeth and John into the vortex of making life and death decisions and giving round-the-clock medical care. Feeling unqualified to make high stakes

choices amidst great financial pressures, the family moved many times to meet Daniel's needs. Amidst this storm came the joy of expecting a second son Joseph, yet Elizabeth again began to labor prematurely. She stayed at Providence Hospital for five months to carry Joseph to term. In the meantime, John started a new job in rural Alaska while taking care of a special needs toddler and visiting Elizabeth once a week in the hospital. After months of hospital life, baby Joseph was born a day overdue! He continued to spend much of his early life in doctor's waiting rooms, therapy sessions, and at his older brother's preschool.

Next came the surprise, Luke, and against all odds, he was full term weighing 9 pounds, 4.5 ounces at birth.

The two oldest boys have gone on to become renowned for their passion, dedication and achievements in Native Youth Olympics. They are both record holders, Team Alaska members for the 2024 Arctic Winter Games, and have even been interviewed by the New York Times. Daniel just received national recognition for his inspirational life story by winning the YES, I Can! Award from the Council on Exceptional Children.

Stone Soup Group came into their lives when Daniel was only two. SSG hosted an event for families who had to make the high stakes medical choice of whether or not to get a cochlear implant. It was monumental for the Rodgers to be able to hear different perspectives and meet families like theirs. Throughout the years, SSG has filled in the gaps for the Rodgers that other systems, schools, and organizations could not in a wide range of areas from technology to community.

The Rodgers' journey through grief and fear, joys and triumphs, challenges and exhaustion has inspired the soundtrack to their lives as they have processed these experiences through writing and performing music. Through their music, they've been reminded of what is truly important. Some of this music and Daniel's story is on John's YouTube channel called AK GuitarWorks. It is the Rodgers' hope that the song they bring to this conference would encourage parents to realize anew that their hard work is valued, and their sacrifices are worth it.