

# Baby BALANCE

JUDE JENSEN-PERRY, 12, DESCRIBES THE CAREFUL BALANCE BETWEEN CARING FOR HIS NEWBORN AT HOME AND SUCCEEDING IN THE CLASSROOM



*Jude*



**O**n the afternoon of May 5th, 2021, baby girl Ripley opened her eyes for the very first time. Her parents, **Jude Jensen-Perry, 12**, and **Isabella Hanns, 12**, could not be happier to bring a new life into the world. However, the onset of a newborn in high school brought along an endless list of challenges. Here is the story of how Jude, Isabella, and Ripley have navigated their new life between home and high school.

"Ripley turned five months old on the fifth of October. We had a big baby shower about a month before Isabella was due. Isabella's family flew in from Chicago to join my family and me for the baby shower, and it was a big party."

"It's definitely not easy juggling school and Ripley; it's very hard. School takes up the biggest chunk of my time, and then I work at the school every day from three to six. Pretty much the only free time I have is on the weekends, but I always try my best to put aside about an hour every single night to spend time with Ripley and Isabella. It has not been easy and it certainly takes a lot of work."

"I made sure to coordinate with the school to have all of my off periods in the morning and I do two online classes. The purpose of doing so was so I could be at home more to help Isabella out with the baby. For example, I don't have to come into school until 11:30 a.m. on Navy days. The counselors definitely helped out a lot in giving me more time in my schedule."

"I am graduating in December, and then I plan on working here at the school full-time as a custodian. From there, I plan on going to Pikes Peak Community College to get my teaching degree. Once I start working full-time and I don't have the extra chunk of homework, I will have a lot more time for Isabella and Ripley. Isabella is also planning to graduate in December and stay home with the baby a lot more."

"Spending time with Ripley is absolutely my favorite part of the day. I look forward to seeing her every single day when I get off work. We have been shopping for clothes, food, and other stuff for Ripley at Walmart. We are also registered with WIC,\* which is for teen moms that allows us to get a lot of essential things for free."

"Overall it's definitely not easy, but it's also definitely possible. When we and our families first found out, the number one thing we heard was 'You're not going to be able to do this.' It feels really good to kind of prove them wrong."

\*WIC (Women, Infants & Children) is a public health service managed by El Paso County to provide children and women with food, referrals to other programs, and nutritional insight.

interview with jude jensen-perry by ethan michon.