

## **What is the Jellybean Conspiracy?**

by Howard Martin

Producer and Founder of the Jellybean Conspiracy

Look at a jar of jellybeans. You have to admit it's a cheerful sight. Feast your eyes on those sweet little dumplings of sugar, pressing their pudgy faces against the glass, proudly offering themselves in a riot of colors: strawberry red, mandarin orange, lemon yellow, lime green, grape purple, licorice black and bubble-gum pink. Think about the universe in which they live. It's a universe where every bean has its own special place and where each one at some time hears the words, so satisfying to a jellybean's ears: "This jellybean is just right."

Now imagine a human community as a jar of jellybeans. All different sizes and shapes, some gifted one way, some another, but no person without a distinct gift and no one person ultimately more important than another. In a jellybean community, each person is recognized as having a unique and irreplaceable contribution to make and each one is able to hear the words, "This person is just right."

The Jellybean Conspiracy is a way of discovering what it takes to realize such a community. We call it a "conspiracy" because it brings people together to pass on a secret of potentially life-changing significance. The word is made up of two parts: "con-" which means "together," and "spir-" which means, "to breathe." To conspire is thus "to breathe together" or "to breathe as one." A Jellybean Conspiracy is a project in which people of different gifts come together as one to tell the Jellybean Secret.

The Jellybean Secret is this: everyone's life is important. According to Jellybean wisdom, we lay the foundation for a healthy community when each person — including the ones whose gifts are most hidden — is accepted as he or she is and given a fair opportunity to develop his or her potential. Surely that's a secret worth passing on.

Three of my siblings — Olive, Alison, and Jeffi — were born with MPS that caused them to have multiple disabilities. The Jellybean Conspiracy has been created, in part, to celebrate the lives of my sister and brothers and to honor the memory of Rene Martin, my mother, who affirmed and enhanced their lives over a span of twenty-six years.

May we all be given the gift of being accepted in the great jellybean jar of life.