

Just an ordinary fo

FROM the moment we settled on the floor for cups of coffee, it was clear this was no ordinary family.

The Coutis-Crofts family may have a combined multitude of disabilities but all challenges are conquered with positive thinking, love and a dose of good humour.

John Coutis and Leanne and Clayton Crofts live at Springfield and tour nationally and internationally, inspiring thousands with their vivid survival stories.

John was born "the size of a coca cola can" and not expected to live one day let alone 35 years.

"I was born with legs all deformed and bent out of shape, (they) never, ever worked right from day one," he explained.

"The doctors told my parents I had no hope of living the first day."

Clayton has shunted hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and autism.

"Everybody else is built with an automatic valve that gets rid of their fluids but mine didn't work properly so I had to get what's called a shunt," Clayton explained candidly.

"There's a pump in my brain and there's a valve (with tubing)



FACE TO FACE

With Carmen Greive

into my stomach...and in my stomach there's six foot of tubing."

Leanne was told Clayton would "never walk, talk, eat or drink".

She said he could not crawl until he was three and was wheelchair bound.

Clayton overcomes what he calls daily "challenges" in leaps and bounds.

Eagerly chatting and joking with John, who affectionately calls him "my little trifecta", it was not hard to see why Clayton was voted junior school captain at Woodcrest College this year.

Clayton said his winning speech helped him beat more than 90 candidates for the position.

The 16-year-old is brilliantly

spoken, as evidenced by his insightful approach to school bullying.

"Even when I get it, it doesn't phase me in the least," he said.

"I think, 'well, this is my opinion' and that's all I need to know. They can call me whatever they want as long as I know what kind of person I am in my own heart."

School was more difficult for John who endured a "fair amount" of bullying when he began in Year 5.

"I got tied up and thrown in the bin and the bin was set on fire," he said.

"In high school I had my legs all cut open with razor blades during an exam...I've put all those challenges behind me to get on with it."

The Springfield family toured China last year running inspirational seminars for thousands of people and are preparing for Hong Kong.

"Our goal is to inspire one person everyday and if we can do that it's been a great day," John said.

And the message is simple: make the most of life and make things happen.

"If we can do it why can't you?" he said.



Leanne Crofts and John Coutis proud of their "inspiring family".

◀ Springfield family John Coutis and Leanne Crofts inspire thousands with their stories.



IN between overseas tours, the Crofts are in training for a fun run on the Gold Coast.

The family plan to raise \$10,000 and have already secured Australian Olympic funding.

"There's three different disabilities: hydrocephalus, amputee...and John has a very painful muscle condition."

Like everything in life, the family has profile celebrities for the event, including Gibson. They have already raised \$10,000 for the QLD Group, Forest Lake.

To donate money, call 3818 1111.