Sentinel photo by TABITHA GOODLING

The Sheaffer children sit in their living room, from left, front, Erin, 5, and Claire, 2 1/2; back, Grace, 10, Emily and Rachel, 7, and Luke 9.

Kids, kids and more kids

Family of eight finds that there's never a dull moment

By **TABITHA GOODLING**
Sentinel correspondent

Eight year-old Luke Sheaffer explains the size of his family the same way each time he is asked.

"Mom wanted four (kids). Dad wanted two. They got six."

Mom and Dad

Jason and Teresa Sheaffer, of McAlisterville, were married in 1996 with hopes of starting a family. Jason, an only child, wanted to keep it small and simple. Teresa, the oldest of four children, was hopeful to replicate her upbringing. The couple believes God had a sense of humor and a creative design for their family.

The Sheaffers have seen in their 15 years of marriage many obstacles and blessings that come with parenting: infertility, loss of a child, a multiple birth, and raising a child with Down's Syndrome.

When the couple began their journey to have children doctors gave them an "undiagnosed" reason for infertility. So they waited. Five years later - without any planning – a daughter, Grace, was born.

Grace

The first Sheaffer child had no idea what an impact she would have on her family. Now at age 10, she is the leader of the pack.

"She's bossy," says younger brother Luke.

Mom, however, sees her role

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— Luke Sheaffer, 8, explaining the size of his family