

Careforce Connection

Your Link to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Lillis, Nicole

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Read Your Miracle Monday Stories—Don't Forget to Wear Your Children's Shirt for T-Shirt Tuesday

This week, we're celebrating [National Hospital Week](#) and [National Nurses Week](#). Last week, we asked you to submit your stories about the incredible patient care our nurses, physicians and clinical staff deliver for Miracle Monday. As always, you delivered with some amazing stories touting our great patients and staff.

- Chip Madren, a brain cancer patient at Scottish Rite, completed the NCR Sprint for Cancer 5 & 10k last month. This photo shows Chip crossing the finish line with Kimberly Duckworth, his Physical Therapist. For more information about Chip and his amazing story, visit chipnation.org.
- A team of caregivers at Egleston gave a newlywed the gift of life. [Read the AJC article](#) about our adult ECMO patient and the many ways Children's employees delivered the best care.
- A mother thanks Christine Edge, Speech Therapist at Sandy Plains Rehab, for her incredibly thorough and thoughtful evaluation and for helping her find a simple solution to a feeding issue. [Read the hand-written letter](#).
- A family describes the incredible care provided over the last two years by the team at Marcus Autism Center. [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.
- A grateful mother writes in share her appreciation for the care and flexibility shown by one of our physical therapists at Sandy Plains Rehab. [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.
- One of our access specialists at Cobb Rehab went above and beyond to get approval for a young boy's speech therapy. [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.
- An impressed co-worker praises clinical research nurse for the way she impacts patients. [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.
- A family writes to acknowledge the incredible care their son received during the last year from a Children's caregiver, stating "every family should be so lucky to have someone like you as a resource for their child." [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.
- A grandmother shares her thoughts on the commitment and skills shown by a caregiver at Sandy Plains Rehab. [Jump down to letter](#) or keep scrolling.



To everyone at the Marcus Autism Center:

There are no words that could express the deepest gratitude and appreciation for all that has been done with and for Joey over the past 2 years. There are so many people who have played such an important role in his growth and development. I don't even know where to begin in saying thank you for all that each and everyone of you has done in being a part of our family. Not being there every day or three days a week is going to leave a huge void in our lives and each of you are going to be sincerely missed. I have no doubt that Joey is going to experience great success the rest of this year in his early intervention pre-k and moving forward in kindergarten next year because of all the little and big things you have done.

I wanted to list some of the things that have meant the most to us over the past two years and this is just a small account of all the wonderful things you have helped Joey accomplish.

When Joey started at MAC in March of 2010, he had very little language, just a few vocal approximations like cookie (ookie), drink (ri), movie (ovie), and not much more than that. In a very short amount of time he was communicating more clearly and expressing his needs. These little things made his frustration levels go down exponentially.

I will never forget the first day that Joey wrapped his little arms around me and gave me a hug around my neck for the first time. There was no way to control the tears flowing down my face to finally see my child come back to life and to me. The dullness in his eyes faded and he was coming to life right before my eyes. The first time I heard him say "I love you" and every day since, melts my heart and it is because of the hard work and dedication of the MAC team/family that he can express this and now accompany it with the sweetest of kisses.

This may not seem like a big one but for us it has been huge and something to truly celebrate. Giving Joey independence to use the restroom and taking the stress of trying to teach that on my own away so that I can just enjoy the little boy he becomes is priceless. Then when we realized he needed more independence by being able to go potty standing up on his own and you took the challenge and made it happen in just two short days. Now I can feel confident that when he starts kindergarten next year, it will be an easier transition for him and because he won't need help going potty, he will not stand out as being "different" and can be in the inclusion classes without hesitation.

Every day we spent at the MAC, Joey (and I) was made to feel as if he was the center of the universe (and every child is treated that way from the moment they walk in). From the moment we get Lisa's smiling face and a welcome, to Danielle and Yolanda as we sign in for our day making sure they say hello to every kiddo and every parent, to Liz in the library who makes us always feel welcome, answer our questions, help us find resources, and let us know our kids are welcome in the resource room, Charlie always making a point to stop and play with Joey and talk to him, the entire CS teams we have had the past two years (Starr, Amanda, Jade, and Francine), the entire team that has worked directly with Joey (can't even begin to list them all from the past two years but you all know who you are), and even those that are on the Behavioral Side that made a point when they saw Joey to say hi, swing him around, play with him, and love on him. Those conducting research (Addie, Crystal, and Danny) that he has participated in, seeing his potential and respecting his boundaries, and listening to me when I had concerns. Also, a huge thank you to Dr. Amber Valentino for all she has taught me personally, the support she has provided and will continue to provide, and fostering hope for Joey's future.

There are so many more things that we could go through to show just how much he has grown over the past two years. Just looking at his ABLLS from where he started and where he is now - it's just astonishing. Friday was one of the hardest days for me personally because I know that the past two years have been such an important part of who he has become, everyone there has become such a part of our family, we have grown to appreciate, love, and care for everyone that has interacted with Joey no matter how big or small. To know that we will not be there as often as we have been is hard for us because we know, without a doubt, that Joey has spent the past two years in the best place he could have ever been, with the best people, getting the best care, and being molded into an incredible 5 year old that is ready to tackle the world.

Thank you to each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. When I heard the words "Joey has autism" in February of 2009, my hopes and dreams for what I thought his future would be were almost lost. It was a punch in the chest I was not expecting. I was devastated, scared, and angry. Then, we were introduced to a new extension to our family at the MAC - beginning with the Verbal Behavior Workshop, CAP program, and then the LLC. There is no end to Joey's future, there is no limit to what he can accomplish and what he will be able to do, the life is back in those big blue eyes, and our future is bright, promising, and we are excited. Thank you so much for giving us our son back and for all our future holds. We love you all for all you have done and there is no way to truly express our thanks and appreciation. You will forever hold a special place in our hearts.

With the sincerest of appreciation,
The Dechant Family

Letter from a parent regarding Colleen Simon, Physical Therapist, Sandy Plains Rehab

Hello, my name is Crystal Piantek and my daughter, Brayleigh, is in physical therapy with Colleen Simon. My daughter is seven months old, and I have a very busy and hectic life. Colleen has been such an outstanding therapist and has worked with my schedule since day 1. I have emailed her at the last minute and she is always able to work with me.

I felt she deserved to be recognized for the outstanding service she has provided to my family. Children's is very lucky to have a therapist like her, and I will always have great things to say about Children's and Colleen.

I just wanted to email you and let you know I have had a great experience with Children's. Thank you and have a great day.

Crystal Piantek

Letter from a parent regarding Jill Dickens, Access Specialist, Cobb Rehab Church Street

When we initially talked to my insurance regarding my son, Tyson's, speech therapy, they denied the approval request.

Jill Dickens went above and beyond to contact my insurance and tell me what we needed from our pediatrician in order to get it approved. After many calls to our provider and faxing information several times, they approved it.

If it weren't for Jill's persistence and help, we would not have been able to start his therapy. I really appreciate all of her help.

Letter from a co-worker about Stephanie Meisner, Clinical Research Nurse

I know that when you hear Research Nurse, you may not think about someone who offers patient care or impacts our patients in a personal way. But I want to relay a story to you about one of our Clinical Research Nurses at Egleston: Stephanie Meisner.

Stephanie started her nursing career in the PICU at Hughes Spalding and later transferred to the Egleston to care for the sickest of the sick and serve as a role model and mentor in the PICU. There, she transitioned to Clinical Research and began working on a challenging trial in the Endocrine Division. Her trials require her to see her diabetes patients on a weekly or monthly basis. She has an incredible ability to build instant rapport and trust with these special patients, and comes up with fun nicknames for them, such as "Sweet Sixteen" and "Runner Boy."

"Runner Boy" is a high school senior, who is headed to college on a running scholarship but had his world rocked with the diagnosis of diabetes. Stephanie enrolled him in a significant research trial, but unfortunately was unable to keep him in the study much to the disappointment of Stephanie and her patient and family.

Below is an excerpt from an email sent by "Runner Boy" and one from his mom that testifies to the care and impact Stephanie had, not only him, but on all her patients.

"I know I am only coming in for one more visit, but I wanted to go ahead and thank you again for everything you have done...I really couldn't have asked you to do any more than you have done. For the short time I was in the study, I enjoyed getting to know you, Dr. Fellner and Nick. I'm just glad I was one of the few to even have a chance to be part of this. I hope this drug turns into a success that will help all of us diabetics inch closer to a cure."

His mom writes, "During the short time we spent together during the clinical trial, (my son) grew to really like and respect you. Maybe it is the common love of running or just the massive amount of support you've always shown him....Even though he has only known you a short time, you have played a significant role in his acceptance of his disease."

This is just one of many of patients that have been cared for and support by Stephanie. She is an incredible advocate for her patients and sets the bar high for those of us who have the privilege of working with her each day.

Cheryl Stone
Clinical Research Nurse
Critical Care Medicine, Egleston

Letter from parents regarding Kelly Beck, Rehab Clinical Supervisor and Speech Therapist at Sandy Plains Rehab

Dear Kelly,

I wanted to write you a letter to express our appreciation for all that you did for Grady over the past year.

From the first time I called you in November 2010 before his eval to the last visit we had with you this past November, you were always up-front, honest and professional with us. I always felt like you had Grady's best interest in mind and that you listened to what we had to say and valued us as partners in his therapy.

After having worked in health care for 13 years, three of those years managing an outpatient pediatric therapy practice, I can honestly say that you are the kind of therapist that any employer would be thrilled to have as part of their team.

As a parent who has watched her babies come from two pounds each and all the struggles that come along with being born three months prematurely, to where they are now, I can say that there is a special kind of person that we want working with our child/children and you are that person.

I truly believe that your leadership in Grady's care propelled him to where he is now. I felt that you were not only extremely competent in your skill set, but I also really appreciated the way in which you approached our son – with kindness, love and compassion. You treated him as a unique individual and he thrived under your care.

Thank you so much for all that you did for Grady and for us. Every family should be so lucky to have someone like you as a resource for their child! If there is every anything that we can do for you, don't hesitate to contact us.

Very sincerely,

Melinda and Matt

Letter from a patient family regarding Sarah Meyer, Physical Therapist at Cobb Church Street Rehab

Sarah,

I want to share with you how impressed I was at the session yesterday with my granddaughter. I feel like we accomplished more in one session than months with her former therapists.

We will do our best to regularly integrate the activities you recommended into her daily play. Your knowledge, professionalism, understanding of child development and willingness to deal with a strong willed two year old without taking it personally when she did not cooperate was so refreshing!

I also appreciated that you did not mind questions. I ask a lot of questions not to try and second guess or threaten a therapist, but rather to understand more about how to help Karina to develop to her fullest. In the past I have taught piano, and I relate PT and OT to music lessons, if it is not practiced everyday there will not be much progress. I sent Karina's mom a two page write up of the session and she also was very impressed with your work.

Again - thank you so much for your work with us and Karina - and you have my permission to share any of this email, especially with any supervisors. They need to know how impressed we are with you.

See you at our next PT appointment.

Angela



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