



Poem by Douglas Rodriguez that he posted on our Facebook page to honor nurses for National Nurses Day:

*You give your all every day
To give the best to those that come your way
You lift spirits when they're feeling down
Outside you smile, while inside you frown
You help the sick and the weak
You give a voice to those who cannot speak
Caring for the weary and the frail
You do your job without fail
I appreciate what you do every day
The words "THANK YOU" are all I can say*

Permission to Play

In July 2009, 23-month-old Audrey Rodriguez wandered out of her home in Wrightsville, Ga., and accidentally fell into a swimming pool. Emergency personnel resuscitated her and rushed her to Fairview Park Hospital in Dublin. After they inserted a breathing tube, they transported Audrey to Macon Children's Hospital, where she spent a month before transferring to Children's at Scottish Rite.

Before the accident, Audrey could walk, talk and feed herself. Now the 4-year-old cannot do any of those things. But thanks to a devoted dad and dedicated medical professionals, Audrey is receiving therapy that gives her every opportunity for recovery.

"Children's has done so much starting her on the road to getting better," said Audrey's father, Douglas Rodriguez.

When Audrey transferred to Children's at Scottish Rite, she could not swallow without choking. After a month in intensive therapy, she learned to swallow liquids. Today, she can eat stage 3 baby foods, though she still requires a feeding tube.

Audrey continues to make progress. She receives speech, occupational and physical therapy from a center near her home, and she has periodic appointments with Children's therapists, cardiologists and a neurologist. She does not communicate, but she seems to understand words like "drink" or "eat," and she recently waved "hi" to a therapist without any prompting.

She suffers from seizures, but medicines are helping. Doctors at Marcus Autism Center, where she is also a patient, hope to eliminate her seizures completely.

Douglas, who spends 24/7 taking care of his daughter, relies on doctors, nurses and therapists to teach him everything he needs to know for Audrey's sake. "It wasn't just learning to do her therapy and mastering the feeding pump. I even had to re-learn how to play with her," he said.

Before the accident, Douglas would swing Audrey around and drop her on a bed. As Audrey progressed, her therapists encouraged Douglas to continue the mild horseplay while supporting her head. The game still brings smiles to Audrey's face.

When a tragic accident changes everything, a parent needs guidance—including permission to play. 🌐