



# The Eagle's Voice

## Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado

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A Newsletter For Our Valued Partners

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The Scottish Rite Masons and Friends Who Care

Issue 8 – Summer 2006



Katie, age 8

### “A Miracle I Personally Witnessed” by Julie, Katie's Mom

As I write this evening, my daughter Katie is attending her school prom. She has grown into a lovely 18-year-old woman. Katie is a junior in high school majoring in Creative Writing.

Scottish Rite played an important role in this story of a miracle that I personally witnessed hour by hour, day by day, month by month, and year by precious year as I watched my daughter bloom into the talented young woman she is today.

When did I recognize that my baby girl was different from other babies? I can't pinpoint a time, but just a “feeling” that something wasn't quite right. I had already experienced the joy of watching the typical development sequence with Katie's older brother Graham. I was still nursing her at 18 months and had quit my job as a personnel manager to stay home with this very different, very challenging, colicky baby.

I began to notice as she approached her 18<sup>th</sup> month that I couldn't remember if she ever looked me in the eyes. Her gaze was often beyond me and she had a very limited number of words that she could understand. By the age of two she seemed very unusual in the ways that she communicated. My pediatrician reminded me to not compare children, but said that it might reassure me if I sought the advice of a speech and language specialist.

I was referred to a small clinic in Denver. After six months, Katie had made very little progress and we were having difficulty affording the private sessions. They were not covered by insurance. I sought more clinical evaluations and finally was told by a specialist that my precious daughter had something called Pervasive Developmental Disorder of Childhood. At first I thought, “Well, that's good; she'll just outgrow it.” But as I talked to more people, I began to realize that this was one of the most debilitating diagnoses of them all – autism spectrum disorder.

I still remember an absolutely horrifying meeting with Child Find and a woman whose name I will never forget. She explained that Katie would never be able to have a sense of humor, learn academic subjects, communicate things that she thought or dreamed about, and that her communication would be limited to what was happening at the time or to something that she needed.

I eventually ended up in the waiting room in the Audiology, Speech Pathology, and Learning Services Department at The Children's Hospital, awaiting an initial assessment appointment. I don't recall if this was before or after I had to subject my little daughter to a test, which involved placing electrodes on her head, requiring the removal of small amounts of her “yellow as the sun” blonde hair to determine if she

was having seizures. But I can tell you that one single “miracle worker” is the only name I need to remember – Jackie Frazier, the Department’s Coordinator of Diagnostics for Speech-Language Pathology and Katie’s Speech Pathologist. It was she who gave Katie back to me, her daddy, and her brothers Graham and William.

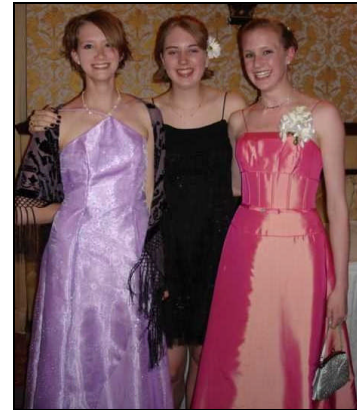
I remember the first meeting with Jackie and my feelings of hope when I arrived and despair when I left. Jackie was very forthright that we had a long road ahead of us and that Katie was lacking some of the most fundamental building blocks of language. As I drove home with Katie I remember questioning if this was the right place to take her, as I wanted desperately to find someone who had a simple fix – an allergy perhaps, even a hearing loss – something, anything but please not autism. Not our Katie.

As the weeks went by, I brought my entire daycare business of children with me to the twice-a-week therapy sessions. I would sit in the observation room and watch, study, and try to memorize each lesson, each session with Katie and Jackie. Sometimes Katie would just shut down and not cooperate at all. Sometimes she would get frustrated and mad. Sometimes she would cry. And, many, many times I would cry to, silently in the observation hallway, as I tended to a tribe of other people’s typical babies.

I remember one session in particular. Jackie had a stack of cards printed with a spider on one and a spider web on another; a toothbrush on one and toothpaste on another, etc. Jackie would ask Katie, “What goes together?” Week after week Katie could not do this. I was terrified. I asked Jackie, “Does this mean that she doesn’t know that toothpaste goes on a toothbrush?” Jackie said, “She doesn’t understand what I am asking her to do.”

Then one day I watched in amazement as she figured out one pair. And then she did them all with a huge smile on her face. She got it. It was almost like seeing her little brain say, “You silly lady! If that’s what you wanted, why didn’t you just tell me.” Connections started to happen at a rapid rate after that point. We knew she was on her way.

I remember many subtle changes as a result of huge leaps in language and communication. For example, I picked up a roll of film that had been developed. In every single photo of Katie, her eyes were looking into mine. Our little girl was coming back to us!



**Katie (left) at Prom, 2006**

Katie will be inducted into the National Honor Society on Monday night and is beginning the college search. She has an AP European History exam on Wednesday, an essay for British Literature, and her novel for Creative Writing is due on Friday. She rehearses a few days a week for her June ballet performance.

In closing, never give up on anyone because miracles really do happen every day. Thank you for the precious gift that Katie received as a recipient of your fund. We will forever be grateful.

### **A Note from Jackie Frazier, Katie’s Speech Pathologist**

When I first met Katie she understood the names of lots of things such as foods, animals, and clothing but did not understand commands, questions, or sentences. I felt she was so distant and disengaged because language simply did not mean much to her. Her progress was, and is, so remarkable given the initial dire prognosis her parents were given. I was so privileged to see the positive influence of therapy as a little girl, distant and aloof, became more and more interactive and communicative as she slowly began to “crack the language code.”

I have a picture of Katie at age 5 or 6 standing next to a sign that says, “Never give up on anyone – miracles happen every day.” How very fortunate we are that the Scottish Rite Foundation provides the funding that allows those “miracles” of language to happen.

**Thank YOU  
for your continuing support**

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**“For a Child’s Sake”**

**The Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity dedicated to funding speech-language therapy for children in Colorado who have childhood language disorders. Please remember the Foundation when considering charitable giving and making estate plans. For more information visit us on the web at [www.scottishritefoundation.org](http://www.scottishritefoundation.org) or call us at 303-861-2410.**