

Caitlin Schuler's Story



Caitlin struggled after birth. She was kept in the hospital and remained on oxygen fighting for her life. She came home at five pounds after spending 29 days in the hospital. Her twin sister Jennifer remained behind. At eight months, Jennifer was officially diagnosed with Robertsonian Down Syndrome and had a secondary diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. Caitlin was diagnosed with CP at 15 months.

When Caitlin was four years old, she had hamstring and heel cord tendon release surgery done to both legs. After she got the casts off, Caitlin began her ice skating career with the Skating Association for the Blind and Handicapped (SABAH). She could barely keep herself upright on the ice using adaptive skates and a special walker when she started her first lesson. Each year the end of season show became bigger. As Caitlin's skills grew, she and some of her friends had special numbers that highlighted skills and the various types of equipment used. In her final season in 2006, Caitlin had a solo.

One of the harsh realities for people with disabilities in the incredible expense for equipment. Thankfully, Caitlin and her family had the help of the Home Service Directors at the Center for Disabilities and later Franziska Racher Centers to find various avenues to help with the expenses. One of Caitlin's physical therapists even created a Foundation to help kids get equipment that insurance did not cover.

There are so many ways that the Home Service Directors have helped Caitlin and her family, including getting respite, Medicaid waiver, ramps, standers, adaptive strollers; and more. The Home Service Coordinators have helped with communication with school and are another person to bounce thoughts around with. They are a wonderful resource and Caitlin's mother says the family would be lost without them.

Caitlin has been involved in many extracurricular activities. She played in an adaptive soccer league, was a Brownie and Girl Scout, and sang in the church and school chorus and a school variety show. She has played a violin and clarinet and wants to learn to play acoustic guitar. She loves music and technology like every other teenager. Most days she can be found with a computer on her lap, phone in hand texting away and an iPod attached to her ears. Caitlin is also an honor student and has great friends.



Joseph Cali's Story

Joseph was born three months premature on Easter Sunday, April 15, 2001. He spent the first six weeks of his life in NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit). He was born at 27 weeks, a healthy, thriving baby who weighed two times the usual size for a baby born this early. Four weeks after birth Joseph was diagnosed with NEC (Necrotizing Enterocolitis) and had intestinal surgery, at the same

time he was diagnosed with PVL (Periventricular Leukomalacia) this appeared on head ultrasound and is the cause of his cerebral palsy.

Joseph received initial therapies through Early Intervention (EI). He attended preschool at the Center for Disability Services, a CP of NYS Affiliate, where he was part of a program called "MOVE" (Movement Opportunities via Education). Joseph made many advances with early therapy and while at the center where he participated in traditional therapies along with swimming. He now attends elementary school in Greenville, Green County. He is in a self contained classroom with a 1:1 aide and moves into mainstream regular classrooms for several subjects. Joseph enjoys extracurricular activities outside of school. He participates in the after school activities club, where he does community and social activities and the chess club. He has done Hippotherapy (therapeutic horseback riding) for many years as well and has recently discovered skiing. Joseph was a telethon representative for the Center for Disability Services in 2005. He has appeared on You-Tube signing at a local event with a trio. His nickname at school is "the Mayor" or the Governor" because he knows most everyone or most everyone knows who he is or knows him.

Joseph is a happy, social young man who enjoys riding his ATV, and fishing with his dad and playing with his dog Gabby. He loves to read, loves school, playing with his Wii and spending time with his family.

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CEREBRAL PALSY HOME SERVICE PROGRAM

The New York Elks Major Projects Cerebral Palsy Home Service Program is among the most unique programs serving people with disabilities in the country. The program represents a powerful demonstration of active collaboration between a fraternal order whose mission encompasses volunteerism and community service, and a statewide not-for-profit advocacy and provider agency.



The Home Service Program provides support services to adults and children with disabilities and their families in their home environment, resulting in a significant improvement in the quality of life for many people throughout New York State.

Since the primary objective of the Home Service Program is to provide individualized services, its staff travels thousands of miles throughout New York State working with people with disabilities and their families to find appropriate supports and services in their communities.

Funding for our Major Project Service Program is provided through individual donations, lodge contributions, the Elks National Foundation and other groups. Your contribution provides Home Service Directors with the support they need to assist people with disabilities to remain active in their community and access programs that allow them to reach their full potential.

THANK YOU FOR CARING AND SHARING.