



an update for *friends* of Meeting Street

Winter 2011

HANDS ON!

Danica's Story

Anything but a textbook case

By *Danica's Mom*

At first glance, Danica is a perfectly healthy 18-month-old little girl with big blue eyes, fine blonde hair, and pudgy cheeks you want to squeeze. She is very easygoing and loves to be with people. So it comes as no surprise that people are shocked to hear that Danica is diagnosed with Aicardi Syndrome.

In the simplest terms, Aicardi is a rare disorder with multiple brain malformations, visual impairments, vertebrae deformities, and aggressive seizures that only affects females. It is so rare that there are only 1,000 cases reported worldwide. Girls with Aicardi Syndrome suffer from hundreds of seizures a day, are moderately to severely developmentally challenged, and have a shorter life expectancy.

Danica was just five weeks old when she started having seizures. She was hospitalized and diagnosed within two days. We were handed a packet of papers that informed us of what to expect for Danica's future. After reading a page of what seemed to be nothing but negativity, I called Meeting Street and enrolled Danica in Early Intervention. She began with Physical Therapy (PT) and is currently getting Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech Therapy, group

swim class, and her personal favorite, Music and Movement class.

When she began therapy at four months old she was unable to roll over, sit, or hold her head still. Now 14 months and countless hours of hard work later, Danica is like a whole new child. PT with Bev has taught her how to sit unassisted, roll over, and pull herself up onto her knees. OT with Heather, has taught her how to use her protective reflexes and her left hand. Swim group has been helping her learn to use her knees and arms for climbing. Speech with Elaine has been teaching her how to chew and swallow food. Her educator, Karen, has been teaching her how to interact with toys and people, and lastly Music and Movement group gives her interaction with other children along with singing, which she loves! Danica's list of accomplishments goes on and continues to grow all the time.

From the very beginning Meeting Street was different, because unlike the textbooks and research that didn't seem to offer any good outcome, EI has given our family hope and determination. Meeting Street has never put a limit on what Danica is capable of even with her challenges. She has an amazing team of therapists that work with her every week. Each one of them is full of energy, positive reinforcement and creativity to help Danica progress. Although Danica has Aicardi Syndrome, we know that with Meeting Street and Early Intervention in her life, the sky is her limit!

Meeting Street Services:
Early Intervention, PT, OT, Speech

Time at Meeting Street:
15 months

Challenges:
Aicardi Syndrome

Milestones:
Rolling over, sitting unassisted, chewing and swallowing food

Danica's Personality:
Happy, fun-loving child, always smiling

What she enjoys most:
Singing in Music & Movement class

Danica

Age: 18 months, Early Intervention



Danica and her mom take a break from swim therapy to smile big for the camera



Meeting Street



A Double Dose of Learning

Meet Allison and Morgan, twins in The Grace School at Meeting Street's inclusive second grade. The seven-year olds have been a part of the Meeting Street family since they were three months old and started in The Bright Futures Early Learning Center. They are developing great academic skills and are learning daily lessons of compassion and acceptance that come from being in a classroom that includes kids of all abilities.

"Meeting Street has been the perfect place for Allison and Morgan. The individual attention each girl receives in the classroom has made a big difference," comments the girls' mother, Lisa. "Even though they are in same room, they get the specific academic support they need. Since the class is small and the teachers are so good, there is a great awareness of the specific academic and social needs of the kids."

The second grade, like all the inclusive classrooms in The Grace School, is staffed with a general education teacher, a special educator and a teacher assistant. This makes it possible for students with and without special needs to work together in the classroom all day long.

"Like many twins, they have their own personalities," their teacher, Patrick Donahue comments. "Allison has a take charge attitude, is very focused on her work and is reading above grade level. Morgan has a lot of energy, loves to socialize and has worked very hard to improve her reading and writing skills this year. I also noticed this year that the confidence level of each girl has grown. They are willing to try new things and can always be relied upon to help."

Although Allison and Morgan are different in many ways, they do agree on one thing. Like most second graders, they love to come to school to see their friends. Both girls have developed strong friendships with their classmates of all abilities.



Allison



Morgan

The twins' mother recognizes how attending Meeting Street has made the girls more aware and more accepting of the idea that people have different needs and different skills. "When the girls talk about their friends it is difficult to know who has special needs and who does not," comments Lisa. "I have had other adults comment on how respectful the girls are, that they seem wise beyond their years, and I attribute those characteristics to the experiences they have had at Meeting Street."

GREAT WAY TO BEGIN A LIFETIME OF LEARNING

Now Enrolling Infants and Toddlers

Our goal in The Bright Futures Early Learning Center is to fill every child's day with experiences that enhance their development so they are prepared for a lifetime of learning! Our classrooms for infants (6 weeks and older) through Pre-K are filled with the happy sounds of children of all abilities who are learning, growing and playing together. Bright Futures has the prestigious NAEYC accreditation that recognizes our high educational standards, the quality of our staff, and the stimulating and nurturing environment we provide all children in our care.

If you know of family who wants to enroll their child in an innovative and nurturing early learning environment, please contact us at info@meetingstreet.org so we can arrange a tour of The Bright Futures Early Learning Center.



Meeting Street Telethon

GET READY! The 2011 Telethon is Almost Here!

The 35th Annual Meeting Street Telethon presented by Cardi's Furniture airs this month! This special event will air on WPRI-12 on Saturday, January 29 from 7 p.m. - 11 p.m. Make sure to mark your calendars!

Once again, talent from WPRI-12 will host this year's Telethon. The four hour show will include an inside look at Meeting Street, with special segments featuring children in Meeting Street's programs and live interviews with Meeting Street families.

Meeting Street is proud to announce this year's Telethon honorary chair persons Curt and Shonda Schilling!

Tune in to meet some of our Meeting Street Children!



Danica



Elvis



Gabriella



Julianna



Ethan



Corey

Meeting Street is grateful to Cardi's Furniture and WPRI-12 for their continued leadership of this signature event. We also want to thank Citizens Bank, the Telethon online auction sponsor, as well as our Corporate sponsors: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island and The Amica Insurance Company.



The Telethon is Meeting Street's most important fundraising event of the year. To donate during the Telethon, you can call **1-888-289-1299** or donate online by going to **www.meetingstreet.org**.

TEXT DONATIONS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE! To Donate \$10 Today Text: Meeting to 50555

\$10.00 will be added to your mobile phone bill/deducted from your prepaid account. Message and Data Rates May Apply. Reply STOP to 50555 to stop. Full terms: mGive.org/T.

THE TELETHON DONATION LINE IS ALREADY CONNECTED so you can call us or visit our website today. 1-888-289-1299
One of the most exciting aspects of the Meeting Street Telethon is the Citizens Bank online auction. Dozens of items are up for bid including: \$5,000 Gift Certificate to Cardi's Furniture, an autographed Tom Brady jersey, and golf at the famous Winged Foot Golf Club in New York. The auction is now open for bidding and closes the night of the Telethon.

Go to www.meetingstreet.org and place a bid or watch the bidding throughout the telecast. If you want to donate an item to the auction or are interested in helping out in any other way, please contact Aimee Harvey, Director of Special Events, at 401-533-9119 or email her at aharvey@meetingstreet.org.



Thanks also to:

- Technology Sponsor: Coastway Community Bank
- Behind the Scenes Tour Sponsor: Bank RI
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- Hospitality Sponsor: Twin Oaks Restaurant
- Beverage Sponsor: Dunkin' Donuts
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- Phone Bank Sponsor: The Washington Trust Company
- Phone Bank Sponsor: Xerox
- T-Shirt Sponsor: White, Carlin & Kelly
- Party Bag Sponsor: Creative Impressions



Gallery Z – Art Show

Gallery Z on Federal Hill hosted an art show this December featuring works of art from our Grace and Carter Schools. The show was titled "All our hands have talents to share." Students were happy and proud to see their creative pieces on display in a real art gallery.



Halloween

One of the favorite activities of the year at Meeting Street is the Annual Halloween Parade. Both students and staff show off their costumes as the children trick-or-treat throughout the halls. Thank you to Mike Montecalvo, the parade grand marshal, as well as all Board members and friends of Meeting Street who joined in the fun by passing out treats!



Harvest Lunch

The Bright Futures Pre-K classroom hosted a harvest lunch to celebrate Thanksgiving this November. The Harvest Lunch allowed students and parents to enjoy a potluck lunch together.



Thanksgiving Baskets

Thanksgiving - Each year students in The Carter School lead Meeting Street in providing to families in need. This Thanksgiving, Meeting Street was able to provide 34 food baskets and 4 catered meals from *Fire Works Catering* to families in need. Thank you to everyone who donated their spare change for Pennies for Turkeys and also those who donated food to those in need. It is a great way for our students to learn to give back to our community.

Meeting Street Happenings

Join us for these events, help us raise funds, and have a great time doing it. For more information on upcoming events, visit www.meetingstreet.org. Mark your calendar!

Providence Business News Award & Dinner

Each year the *Providence Business News*, the major business publication in Rhode Island, selects individuals and businesses for their annual Business Excellence Awards. This year, we are pleased to report that Meeting Street is the recipient of the 2010 Business Excellence Award for "Excellence at a Nonprofit Organization." The awards banquet held in November was a fantastic event that featured former Red Sox player Curt Schilling. Meeting Street is very proud of its selection for this year's excellence award by *Providence Business News*. Meeting Street was pleased to have the new mayor, Angel Tavaras join us for the celebration.



Seasons' Greetings

Thank you to everyone who supported Meeting Street's holiday card sales. This year's holiday card sale was more successful than ever. We were able to raise \$14,000 and the artwork provided by Meeting Street students was spectacular. A special thanks to **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island** for underwriting the holiday cards so all proceeds go directly to the children. A big thanks also to **Coastway Community Bank** for selling our cards at their local branches.

A Thousand Thanks

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Thankathon! Each year during the holidays, Meeting Street likes to give thanks to everyone who donates and supports Meeting Street by taking a day to call all donors and simply say thank you!

Thank you to the hard work of co-chairs Sue Carmody and Kerry Pedroso and the 30+ people who made phone calls. This year Meeting Street was able to reach more than 1,300 donors to say thank you for their dedication to Meeting Street. It was a great way to kick-off the holiday season.



UPCOMING MEETING STREET EVENTS

January

29 35th Annual Meeting Street Telethon & Auction
7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

February

The Carter School Winter Ball
PSO Spaghetti Dinner
Bright Futures Sweetheart Dance

May

Meeting Street Family Fair

June

Meeting Street Graduation

Melting your heart is easy for a Meeting Street child like



pierre

who is learning new skills at Early Head Start.



Meeting Street

1000 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02905

NonProfit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Providence, RI
Permit # 1200

Happiness for a Meeting Street child like



nathan

is having a friend in his class like Sophie.

WHERE EVERY CHILD THRIVES.

Every Donation Counts

Every donation makes a difference in supporting Meeting Street and our students. Especially with major state budget cuts and hard economic times, every dollar matters. Meeting Street is proud that close to 90 cents of every dollar goes directly to support children and families.

Thank you for your support!

- \$25** – Adaptive art supplies
- \$50** – Book on CD for library collection
- \$100** – Life jacket for aquatic therapy
- \$250** – Help send 8 students for one week of Hippotherapy (therapeutic horseback riding)
- \$500** – High School rolling safety walker

To make a donation, please visit www.meetingstreet.org
Thank you for your support!

Meeting Street is on Facebook!



and we want you to become one of our fans! Join us today!

Sign Up for Meeting Street's Online Community!

- Sign up for e-news
- Make a gift
- View your donation history
- View upcoming events

Email Connections

Meeting Street wants to share our news with you via email. It makes it easier to send you quick updates. It saves the agency money, and it saves trees! Please send your email to: jcanole@meetingstreet.org.

Don't worry....we won't bombard you with information – just news you can use.

HANDS ON!

Hands On! is published to keep in touch with friends of Meeting Street. Each issue highlights our services, support and activities, and celebrates the accomplishments of the children, young adults and families we serve. Forward your comments and suggestions to: John Canole, editor, at 401-533-9238 or email him at jcanole@meetingstreet.org.