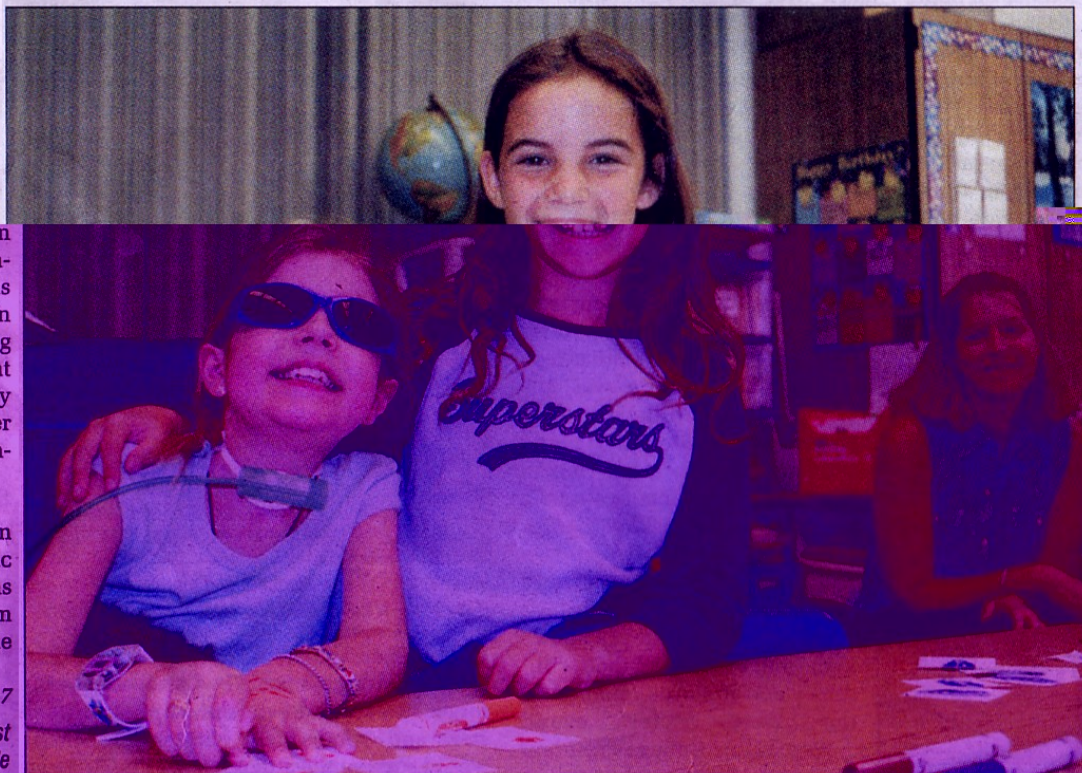


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Kaitlyn returns to school



Eight-year-old struggles to overcome devastating effects of severe allergic reaction

By Julie Davis Berry
Editor

At recess Kaitlyn Langstaff has always been one of the most popular kids at the Forest Hill Elementary School campus. And she still is, despite the fact that the fall she returned to school blind, mute and in a wheelchair after surviving a devastating allergic reaction to Ibuprofen. The fact that she is alive at all is a testament to a very courageous little girl, the strong love of her family and the amazing compassion of a community touched by her health crisis.

Physical issues

While out of town last April, Kaitlyn became ill with a very rare and severe allergic reaction to Ibuprofen, which is called Steven Johnson Syndrome. She was airlifted from Fresno to a Los Angeles hospital where she spent several weeks on life support.

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Kaitlyn is especially glad to be sitting next to her best friend Ariana Gomez in Mrs. Dorsch's third grade class. Her mother Kerry watches in the background.

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But the family has not been able to access any financial help. "She doesn't qualify for social security benefits. She has a lot of problems but she doesn't qualify for government assistance because she doesn't have a developmental disability, just a physical disability," said Kerry. "A family of four cannot have assets of more than \$3,000 not including one car and a house. They said to call back when Kaitlyn is 18 or we have no income."

The ironic thing is that Kerry was scheduled to start a new job as a marketing director at Nuance the day that her daughter was airlifted to a Los Angeles hospital. Kerry feels that once Kaitlyn starts to feel comfortable being at school

without her in the very near future, she would like to return to consulting on a part time basis. Brad's specialty is putting on trade shows in the high tech sector and with that comes travel so it is unlikely that he will return to a similar job.

Kerry is looking to start up her marketing consulting business again. Find out

more about Kerry's consulting business at www.langstaffcommunications.com

In the meantime the family says that the donations have been helping them to pay for things like the mortgage and food.

Community Support

The outpouring of support from family, friends and the community in general has been a real source of solace for the family during this extremely difficult time.

"It's impressive to see how nice people can be in this day and age," said Kerry. "All of these people, some who we barely know, are reaching out to help us. We are so grateful for this great community."

When Kaitlyn was first sick a family friend, Tammy Davies, flew down and

ended up staying for a week while Kaitlyn was transferred to Los Angeles. "It was a very awful week," said Davies. "I was just there to let Kerry vent because it was so tough. They are quite remarkable people. Kerry and Brad have always just given, given, given to the community. Now that

they are in their new community is responding and they are reaping what they've sown."

Kerry has led Brownie troops, Destination Imagination groups and produced the school play last year for Rolling Hills Middle School. Brad was in charge of Indian Princesses at the Southwest YMCA and has coached Bobby Sox teams. They have touched many lives in the community and people have responded in droves.

Three times a week people bring dinner to the family. "Even the principal of Rolling Hills, Mrs. Atkinson, brought us dinner!" said Kerry. And, twice a month a group of moms the family met through school and brownies comes over to clean the family's house. These are all organized

by the Langstaff's neighbor Karen Pasos. "It's pretty easy because I can send out messages over the Internet and people just sign up," said Pasos. "We have people from Forest Hill, Rolling Hills, Indian Princesses, Bobby Sox, Brownies and everyone just wants to help the family."

Kerry's Girl Scout troop is putting together all of the cards and letters in scrapbooks for the family. "There were over 814 get well cards sent to Kaitlyn," said Kerry. "The cards were just amazing. They were all so supportive."

Davies said that the other day she was thinking about the Langstaff's and she thought, "They could really use a miracle. But, you know they already have a miracle. Kaitlyn is still with us."

If you would like to donate money to Kaitlyn and her family send a check to Kaitlyn Langstaff, c/o Forest Hill Elementary School, 4450 McCoy Avenue, San Jose, 95130.



Kaitlyn is one of the top students in Mrs. Dorsch's third grade class. She constantly raises her

hand to participate in class discussions. Her aide, Nicole Zannini, is always at Kaitlyn's side to verbally praise her or to take care of her physical needs.

through to do before. Nicole Zannini is her full time aide. She has been an aide with the district for nine years. "I'm used to working with children who are born with disabilities. It's second nature to me," said Zannini. "When I found out that I would be working with Kaitlyn I knew it was going to be a challenge because of all of the adjustments that Kaitlyn was going to have to make. But, she is a great kid. And her family is really awesome. They don't baby her. They want her to be independent. They are very upfront about her issues."

of a celebrity on campus. And her parents came in the first day and explained things to the class and told the kids about things they might see and hear which was very smart. They don't over accommodate her."

Kerry is overwhelmed by the support Kaitlyn gets from the other students. "The kids have been very supportive from the very first day. At recess the kids would take the bracelets off their arms and give them to Kaitlyn," said Kerry.

Her best friend Ariana Gomez sits next to her in class. They were on the same soccer team last year. This year Kaitlyn will have an honorary T-shirt to wear on the sidelines. "I saw her at Valley Med and she looked better than I thought she would," said Ariana. "I like Kaitlyn because she is really funny. Now I can understand

to our older daughter Kaitlyn's play practice."

Since she was in the hospital Kaitlyn has had a dream of having a Golden Retriever puppy like her dad had when he was growing up. She would name the puppy Daisy. The family would like to make her dream come true soon.

Financial issues

The family is also struggling with devastating financial issues. Both Kerry and Brad were unemployed when Kaitlyn's illness occurred. They have been unable to work since then due to the 24-hour care that Kaitlyn's illness requires. "We have exhausted our unemployment. We have been living off of donations and our savings and they are almost gone," said a weary Kerry.

One would think that there would be help from social security or some other government

hand to participate in class discussions. Her aide, Nicole Zannini, is always at Kaitlyn's side to verbally praise her or to take care of her physical needs.

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