

HOMETOWN HERO:

Maggie Rapp

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Many people struggle with deciding on the right career — trying to find something meaningful to do with their lives. Then there are those people who are destined for the career of all careers — becoming a special education teacher. And among this elite group of truly amazing individuals, there are those like Maggie Rapp who are gifted with that certain magic that seems to make all things possible. This magic connects her to all of the children with whom she works at Pasadena Elementary — including the neuro-typical children to whom she is teaching autism awareness and inclusion by inviting them into her classroom. From day one of her teaching career (which was in August 2007), Maggie has hit the ground running. Quite simply, she ‘gets’ children with autism. She is a Hometown Hero in our lives because of the contributions that she has made to the lives of our sons, Bradley and Dylan. She is their teacher; however, she goes way beyond that title every day. Ms. Rapp has embraced this job with a passion that is such a breath of fresh air, totally unexpected, and yet totally appreciated. She treats each child in her classroom as a gifted star pupil. She has excellent communication skills and writes in-depth, daily notes on each child’s progress. She assists with all aspects of the children, not just for the 6.5 hours that they are in school. She feels that what goes on at home is just as important as what goes on at school. We feel so blessed to have Ms. Rapp be a part of our lives and we know that Dylan and Bradley are lucky to have her as their teacher.

Here’s just one example of Maggie Rapp’s level of dedication. Because Ms. Rapp knew that many of her students had had some negative Santa encounters, she was determined to bring Santa to their classroom so that they could visit with Santa in a comforting, familiar setting. And when she had trouble employing one of Santa’s helpers to fill in for the man in red, she recruited her dad for the job. Mr. Rapp made a wonderful Santa. The kids loved him, and everyone either sat on his lap or gave him a hug. Everyone had their picture taken with Santa, and the kids didn’t have to wait in long lines.

We are also nominating Maggie because Ms. Rapp’s magic has directly touched our lives. She is Bradley and Dylan’s teacher, as well as a dear friend. Her teaching career is more of a calling than a career because she spends a considerable amount of her free time forwarding the cause of autism awareness as well as honing her teaching and communication skills. She has participated in Bike to the Beach for the last few years, as well as various Walk Now / Autism Speaks events. Maggie can always find the positive aspect of any situation—even on those bleak days when we are dealing with lovely behavioral issues like hitting. We are truly a team--working together and doing whatever it takes to reach our sons and help them learn. Ms. Rapp is firm when absolutely necessary, but always kind and loving to each and every one of her students. Dylan and Bradley have many heroes and angels in their lives. Maggie qualifies as both. We are truly honored to nominate her on behalf of Dylan, Bradley, and all of the students who are so lucky to have her as their teacher!