

HOMETOWN HERO:

Denise Shafer

“Thank you, Shafer, for all that you have done and continue to do. You will always hold a place in my heart and Adam’s as well.”

I would like to nominate Denise Shafer, or as Adam calls her, ‘SHAFER,’ as my family’s, friends’ — and anyone Adam comes in contact with — HOMETOWN HERO! SHAFER is an amazing Special Ed teacher at Nantucket Elementary School who has made the greatest impact on Adam in all of his 3½ years of therapy. I was so worried about Adam being mainstreamed into a kindergarten class from the day his ECI teacher told me he was ready. All summer long I thought about it and no way was he ready. I received a letter in the mail in the summer from Denise introducing herself and a call just to confirm I got the letter. She was excited for the new school year and excited to meet Adam. I was starting to feel much better, thinking, ‘OK this could be good.’

I got the post card in the mail for his kindergarten conference with Ms. Gilbert (aka ‘Ms. Skipper’ to Adam). Denise was there for awhile and she had another conference so she asked if I had any other questions. I told her no, but I really did, I was just so nervous. After she left, I asked Ms. Gilbert if Adam would have an aide and she said she didn’t think so, that the school didn’t get the funding. I was calm until I left the school. I cried and was so upset thinking how in the world is Adam going to get to his class, he is going to disappear, he is going to disrupt the class so bad, and I just felt sick.

I called none other than my former (he will always be my hero) Hometown Hero, Duane, and told him the story. He left Fort Washington and came to Crofton, picked me up and took me back to the school. Here I am, a 32-year-old woman crying to her former Hometown Hero about her son. He made me go back in and ask for Shafer. I told her what happened and said to her, “Do you want 24 parents calling or just one?” She immediately said, “NO, NO, NO, he definitely will have an aide.”

Shafer was my favorite person that day and it hasn’t changed.

Shafer sends me e-mails all hours of the night and on weekends informing me of Adam’s accomplishments and troubles. From being the star on the playground to dumping his head in the toilet, I love to hear it all.

Adam has a great team working with him — his aide, Mrs. McCoy, and a patient FIRST YEAR teacher, Ms. Gilbert, who always involves Adam, and another afternoon aide, Mrs. Rizzi. I have been told over and over again I have a DREAM TEAM and I am so very thankful.

Shafer is just as proud of Adam as we are at home. Shafer has turned out to be not only Adam’s Special Ed teacher but a GREAT friend to me. Thank you, Shafer, for all that you have done and continue to do. You will always hold a place in my heart and Adam’s as well.