

EVERYDAY HEROES

An inside look at the people who make dreams come true at Meeting Street

December 2023

Cheers to another year!

Hello and Happy Holidays! It's been a busy four months since our last edition of *Everyday Heroes* and we're excited to report some of the good work your contributions have made possible for our children and families across Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts.

In this edition of *Everyday Heroes* we feature Jennifer Damiano, music educator for The Carter, Grace and Schwartz Schools, whose passion for music is outdone only by her commitment to making music accessible to ALL students. We also share a recap of two fun-filled campus events, do a little colleague bragging and take a look at the not-too-distant horizon. We can't thank you enough for your commitment to our children and families and we wish you a New Year filled with joy, good health and peace.

Lori Sousa, Director of Development

The Halls are Alive with the Sound of Music

Meet Jennifer Damiano

Music Educator

Providence, RI & Dartmouth, MA campuses

You may not know what a Boomwhacker is, but Jenn Damiano's music students sure do.

On a recent morning on our Providence campus, exuberant students were clapping the hollow plastic tubes on tables, their shoes, and even their wheelchairs, filling the classroom with all sorts of sounds. Each of the colorful percussive instruments emits a different note or pitch when thumped – and each student, regardless of their abilities, was part of the symphony.

Jenn believes music is a language unto itself, and her aim is to help each student find their own unique voice, both for self-expression and for the pure fun of it all.

She's been leading Meeting Street's music program at both the Dartmouth and Providence campuses for seven years, a role she describes as "endlessly fascinating and a perfect fit for me."

Her own love of music began when she was a child. The first time she heard Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, "It became my inspiration for everything," she says. "I made my parents play the songs over and over. It connected me to something bigger in the world. From then on, music has been central to my life."

She works with students of all abilities between the ages of 3 to 22, each with their own need and learning style.

For students in kindergarten through second grade, that means teaching them to play unpitched percussion instruments (think maracas, cymbals, and shakers) and those popular Boomwhackers.



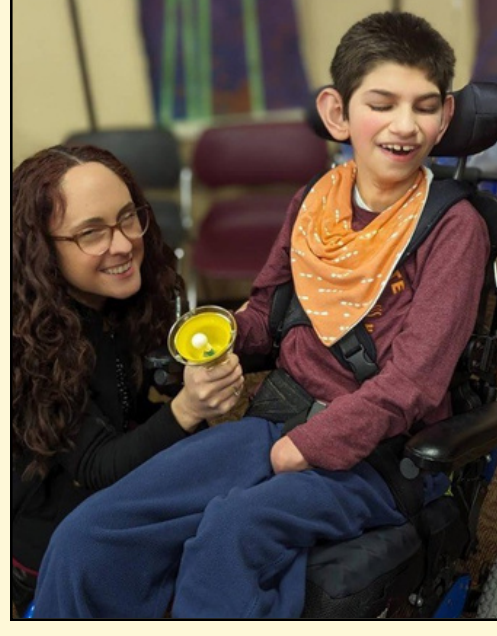
In grades three and four, the children learn to play thumb pianos. Fifth and sixth graders experience the joys of the glockenspiel, while grades seven and eight have fun learning the ukulele and bucket drums.

If a child needs their instrument adapted to use it effectively, Jenn and the wonderful teacher assistants and therapists at Meeting Street make it happen. No one is left out. Everyone is included.

"I encourage curiosity, silliness, and engagement from all the kids, whether or not they are verbal or ambulatory," Jennifer says. "The 'Box of Fun' is a big hit. The sounds produced by the various devices are wild – some found in nature, and some, well, you'd have to hear them to understand."

She adds, "The communication that takes place during music class goes far beyond words. The impact on all of us is profound."

If you'd like to learn more about Meeting Street's music program or sit in on one of our music classes, please email Darija at dbuzakovic@meetingstreet.org and she'll gladly assist you.



Julie Sevilla-Fraysse Returns!

Last year, thanks to the generosity of our Board of Trustees Chair, and music enthusiast, Mike McKelvy, Meeting Street was introduced to the incredible talent and heart of French cellist Julie Sevilla-Fraysse. This unique opportunity for our students is what makes Meeting Street such a special place. Watching our students of all ages respond to Julie's performance was incredibly moving and a testament to the universal language of music.

To everyone's delight, Julie returned to our Dartmouth and Providence campuses earlier this month for an encore performance. Not only were our students mesmerized by her music, they had the chance to play her cello! The pictures below truly speak a thousand words. You can see highlights of Julie's performance on Meeting Street's Facebook page ([click here](#)).



Julie with students at The Schwartz School.

The 48th Annual Meeting Street Telethon

THE MEETING STREET TELETHON
PRESENTED BY: CARDI'S FURNITURE & MATTRESSES

Declynn

Lamont

Zane

Amalya

FEB 3
● ● ●
7:00 PM
● ●
LIVE ON
WPRI-12

Nothing marks the start of a new year quite like the annual Meeting Street Telethon! Tune in to WPRI-12 on Saturday, February 3, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. to meet our starting lineup – Declynn, Lamont, Zane and Amalya – who are guaranteed to steal your heart. Special thanks to our hometown heroes, Cardi's Furniture and Mattresses and WPRI-12, who make this night possible!

Love our team hats? You, too, can join Team Telethon – [click here](#)!

Everyday Heroes in the News

Retaining top-quality talent is the greatest investment Meeting Street makes in its annual operating budget. It is the contributions of loyal donors like you who make this investment possible, as reimbursement rates and programmatic grants do not cover the cost of retaining our incredible educators, therapists and allied professionals. To illustrate the caliber of the individuals who make our programs shine, we want to share the accolades of two colleagues who were recently recognized for contributions to their profession.

Nicole Constantino, OTR/L, CEIS

Assistant Director, Early Childhood Programs

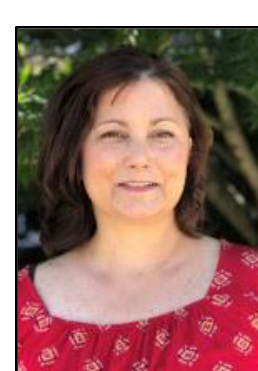
Nicole, who started at Meeting Street as an Occupational Therapist some 13 years ago, was recently nominated and elected by her peers to serve as the President-Elect of the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC). During this six-year commitment, Nicole will serve as the statewide liaison to the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the MA Department of Public Health on all issues concerning Early Intervention, as well as work with "EI Champions" within the state legislature to ensure funding for Early Intervention programs across Massachusetts.

Congratulations, Nicole!



Heidi Lamb

8th Grade Educator, The Grace School



Heidi, who has been teaching social studies at The Grace School for over six years, was awarded the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Award Grand Prize by the Rhode Island League of Women Voters. Now in its 16th year, the award honors teachers who have enriched their students' understanding of civic rights and responsibilities; have encouraged their students' civic participation; and have brought context to crucial events affecting the United States. During the awards ceremony at the Rhode Island State House, RI Secretary of State Gregg Amore noted Heidi's "empower[ment] of students to be agents of change for the betterment of their schools, communities, and on the state and national level." Congratulations, Heidi!

Halloween Highlights

Is it the students' favorite day of the year, or the staff's? Halloween 2023 was a great success and we thank all of our friends who joined us for the festivities on our Dartmouth and Providence campuses! You can view all of our Halloween pictures on our Facebook page by clicking [here](#) and [here](#).



Year-End Giving

It's not too late to make a gift to Meeting Street for calendar year 2023! Secure online giving is available [here](#) and if you're interested in making a gift of appreciated securities, you can download our step-by-step instructions [here](#). Thank you!



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