



EveryDay Heroes

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

Spring 2022



SHE WALKS THE WALK

Meet Michelle Godfrey

Head of School,
The Schwartz School, Dartmouth, MA

When Michelle Godfrey was young, she had a modest learning disability. But rather than holding her back, it paved the way to her future.

“I knew what it felt like to have to work harder than others to master things in school,” says Michelle. “But I also had amazing teachers by my side who made me feel like I could do anything I set my mind to. That’s when I knew I wanted to be a special education teacher.”

Now in her eleventh year at Meeting Street, Michelle began as a teacher’s assistant on the Providence campus. She’s worn different hats over the years before becoming Head of School at The Schwartz School on the Dartmouth campus in September 2021.

“I have the best job in the world,” she says. “I get to hang out with beautiful, inspiring kids and staff all day long. It’s truly a dream job.”

But even dream jobs can keep you up at night, when you care as deeply as Michelle does about

NEW CAREER CHANGES HIS LIFE

Meet Al Hulley,

Physical Therapist Assistant,
Meeting Street, Providence, RI

Al Hulley had an entire career behind him when a life experience steered him in a dramatically new direction — and that led him to Meeting Street.

He had worked his way through the ranks to Vice President of Operations at John Crane Inc., a mechanical engineering firm in Warwick, R.I., when he retired in 2007. But his father’s Parkinson’s disease, and the great care he received from his physical therapist, inspired Al to seek a brand-new career.

“I used to bring my dad to his appointments and was so impressed,” he says. “Not just by the progress my father was able to make with his therapists’ help, but also how skilled, caring, and motivating they were to him. I decided to put my toe in the water and become a physical therapy assistant.”

Al loved working with kids, which made Meeting Street a perfect fit for him in his new field. The



Michelle continued

special education and limitless opportunities for the children at The Schwartz School.

“The question always on my mind is, ‘What can I do to make things better?’ It’s what drives me, day in and day out,” says Michelle. “There are academics and a myriad of therapies for students with special needs, but kids also just need to be kids, and to express themselves through art and music. I want to make sure they are afforded every advantage. Everyone deserves that.”

As a mom, Michelle understands how important it is to communicate closely with families about their child’s day at school, including sharing photos along with daily notes. “They hang on every word and want every little detail,” she says of parents. “We become their eyes and ears, and that’s a sacred duty.”

A special focus for Michelle is how the school supports parents when their child transitions out of The Schwartz School at age 22. Our professionals partner with parents to find the best options available, every step of the way.

When she’s not singing the praises of her dedicated and talented team, Michelle finds herself amazed



by the sheer tenacity of her students to thrive and achieve to the very best of their abilities.

“Every day, we learn something new from every

child. We learn about determination,” Michelle says. “We learn what it means to never give up. We learn the true meaning of perseverance. Honestly, I think we need the kids as much as they need us.”

Al continued

71-year-old, known as “Mr. Al” to his students and colleagues, is marking ten years on the Providence campus this year.

“Being at Meeting Street is one of the most rewarding things I’ve ever done,” he says. “A lot of the children I work with are nonverbal, but boy, do they communicate. These kids make every moment a joy.”



One of his most precious achievements was working with a little girl whose mother dreamed of her daughter learning to walk — and even navigating a mall one day. The

child scooted around on her bottom. So Mr. Al and another therapist worked with her in the sensory gym and the school’s pool, where she started taking steps in and out of the water.

“Our hearts were so full when that little girl was finally able to walk. You can’t put a price tag on that kind of progress,” he says.

In addition to working for Meeting Street, Mr. Al is also a generous donor to our organization. “I can’t think of a place more deserving of my philanthropic support,” he says. “I see firsthand the dedication of everyone who works at Meeting Street. They love these kids. I know that bringing in and retaining top-notch staff takes resources. I want to do my part to support this effort.”

Al says that being a part of Meeting Street has been a life-changing experience for him. “People at work ask me all the time why I have a smile on my face, and I have to tell you, I get so much back every day that I am with our kids,” he says. “Their determination to do all they can inspires me every single day. It’s downright transformational.”