

EVERYDAY HEROES

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

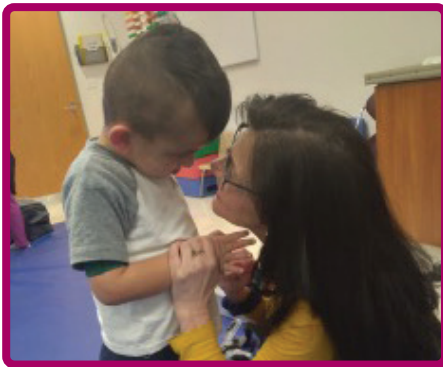
Spring 2023

IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY

Meet Lori Sylvia

Teacher Assistant
The Schwartz School, Dartmouth, MA

Each day, when 5-year-old Zane arrives at The Schwartz School, he's greeted by Lori Sylvia in their own special way. Zane has a condition called cerebral/cortical visual impairment, which



makes facial recognition difficult. So, Lori leans in and touches her forehead to Zane's, allowing his other senses — like the feel of Lori's

long hair on his face — to help identify his beloved teacher assistant.

"Every morning at drop-off, Lori greets my son like he's family," says mom Alissa. "You can imagine what that feels like — not only for Zane, but for me as well."

Lori is passionate about all the students she works with. She's been a teacher assistant (TA) for 17 years in the special needs preschool program, where she meets every child "where they're at," says Michelle Godfrey, Head of The Schwartz School.

As a TA, Lori assists in the classroom wherever she's needed, including feeding, personal care, and providing sensory breaks for the students, who range in age from 3 to 7. She says she enjoys being a "supporting cast member to the teacher."

A CELEBRATION OF STRENGTHS

Meet Linda Tinley

Teacher Assistant
Meeting Street, Providence, RI

Linda Tinley has been a teacher assistant at Meeting Street for 23 years and, she says, "It's been a blessing since the day I started."

Mom Alisha Borrelli speaks in similar terms. Her 18-year-old son Jason receives one-on-one support from Linda. "We are blessed to have her in our lives," Alisha says.

Born with mosaic trisomy 8, a rare genetic disease, Jason is nonverbal and physically fragile with developmental delays. He was enrolled at Meeting Street as a 2-year-old and today is a high school student at The Carter School, which serves kids with cognitive, physical, and medical needs.

"Linda really celebrates Jason's strengths," says his mom. "When he's at home, he loves to bake and make salads. Linda uses this interest when working on his math skills by revolving everything around cooking measurements. Linda just knows



how to tap into the best way for each child to learn and feel good about themselves."

Over her 23-year career, Linda has been a TA

at the pre-, middle, and high school levels. John Kershaw, Head of The Carter School, says Linda "volunteers for everything," including traffic

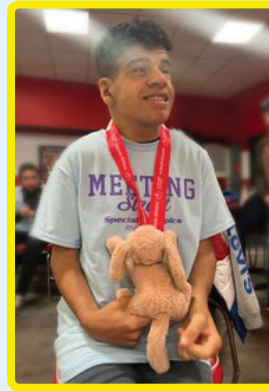
“Most of the students are non-verbal,” Michelle says, “so Lori is constantly looking for effective ways to connect that are unique to each child. She’s also kind, gentle, and passionately committed to her students and her colleagues.”



Lori’s dedication also extends to the students’ families. “My goal is to make sure they know that when their children are with us, they are with family,” Lori says. “When they are at work or going about their day, family

members can be worry-free. They know that at The Schwartz School, their kids are in a safe place.”

Zane’s mom is deeply grateful for Lori’s caring ways. “She just exudes warmth,” Alissa says. “She embodies the best of what Meeting Street is all about.”



coordinator for arriving and departing school buses.

She also assists with after-school activities, like helping Jason learn to play basketball, which he loves. “I love seeing kids progress in their goals,” Linda says. “When you see the smiles on their faces when they get off the bus

in the morning, you know they love being here. And that means the world to all of us here.”

But first and foremost, she says, is the trust she builds with the students and their families. “With trust, you can really make a difference.”

Alisha agrees. “I’m always secure in the knowledge that Jason is emotionally and physically safe at Meeting Street. Linda and the staff — they’re angels.”

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR THE VERY YOUNG

Research shows that children born and raised in poverty face significant challenges to achieving their full potential. Barriers to healthy nutrition and a scarcity of affordable, high-quality early learning programs can put these kids at risk for developmental delays and, ultimately, academic failure.

We are doing everything in our power to change this harsh reality.

In the Fall of 2023, Meeting Street is launching a wide-ranging initiative called the Early Childhood Connection Continuum (ECCC).

Aimed at the critical early childhood years — prenatal to age 5 — the ECCC will operate as a one-stop community resource, with programs that work to strengthen the family unit and foster the healthy development of the whole child. The goal is to help at-risk families easily find the services they need to give their kids the best start in life.

The ECCC will be housed in our new Center for Early Childhood Development in Providence, which will break ground in May, connecting families to the developmental, nutritional, emotional, and educational support they need to get the best start in life, achieve school readiness, and have a brighter future.

To learn more about the many early childhood services available at Meeting Street — from infant nutrition to teen parenting — check out our website at www.meetingstreet.org/programs.

