Adorable Claire

Sweet Athena

the miracle of friendship
claire and athena
It's hard to imagine a world where we have no friends, especially as children. Imagine being that child who cannot communicate, lacks social skills, lives in a world of darkness or silence, and lacks the ability to put a name to the emotions they feel; whether it is scared, happy or sad.

Claire and Athena come from a background of early trauma and abuse along with complex medical issues. In finding each other; their independence is growing and they are better able to reach out of their comfort zone to others and try new experiences. They are learning to identify their feelings and communicate in a way that keeps them safer in our world. They are growing stronger together and as individuals socially, academically and even in their home environments.

In celebrating each other, they demonstrate to our whole community what it means to overcome obstacles that most people don’t encounter. Their experience has encouraged acceptance and inclusion in their school and neighborhood. Other children tell the story to their parents when meeting Claire and Athena in our community. They share this story with pride as they have witnessed these achievements by being involved as school peers. These children actually introduce Claire and Athena to their parents by name and explain why Claire uses a cane and why Athena is so quiet.

Empathy begins early in life, resulting in an environment of inclusion. Our community as a whole is benefitting through these children and their examples. This is yet another miracle of Claire and Athena’s friendship; the gift of empathy.

State of Alaska • Department of Health & Social Services • Governor’s Council on Disabilities & Special Education
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Early trauma keeps Athena from speaking & robs Claire of her vision.

Two girls meet at school
Even though Claire cannot see Athena "signs" to her ...

The two girls are drawn to each other simply through touch.
Claire & Athena are inseparable friends. Providing comfort to each other.
They share a language of the heart, holding hands all day.
Playing “copy me” in the tent is a favorite game. Athena imitates every action Claire makes.
Beautiful Princess Day at school is so much fun. A time to share hugs.

Athena makes sure Claire’s dress is straight.
The princesses are ready to get the Show on the Road!

The friends spend more time playing and sharing; everyone enjoys witnessing their connection.
Claire and Athena become more confident. They try new games and adventures; sport matching kuspuks (made by Athena’s mom, Linda).

Then a huge surprise happens! Athena begins to speak out loud to Claire!
The two friends have lots of fun outside of school too!

Mocha visits
Playing on the deck
Snuggling for storytime
Playing in the sprinkler.
Loving the sunshine.
Visiting the zoo. (Terrific Teacher Aides, Brian and Pam make it even better!).
Lunch after the zoo is a perfect time for hugs and giggles!
Tea parties on the deck

Jumping on the trampoline

Friendship in the sun
Girl talk

Always time for a hug

Faking a nap, giggling instead
Listening to Athena read to Claire is amazing!

The sound of laughter from one, makes the other one laugh even more.
Halloween Sprites

Claire & Athena
Best friends forever: Claire & Athena
They even share the Grandpap!