



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.

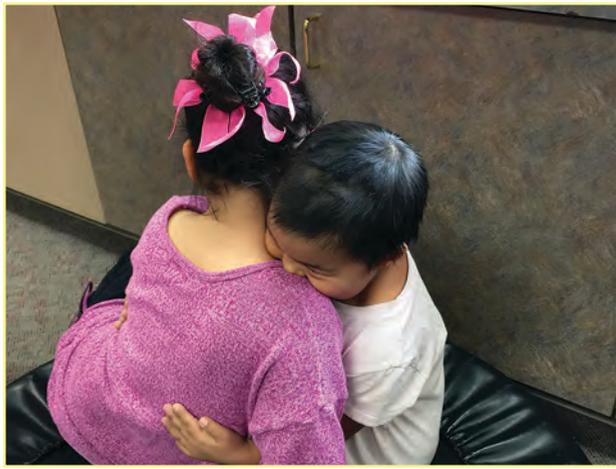
Empathy begins early in life, resulting in an environment of inclusion. Our community as a whole is benefitting through these children and their examples. This is yet another miracle of Claire and Athena's friendship; the gift of empathy. ❤️



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3601 C Street, Suite 740, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 | 907.269.8990 | Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990



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# Two girls meet at school



Early trauma keeps Athena from speaking & robs Claire of her vision.





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.





Athena being a moose.



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!

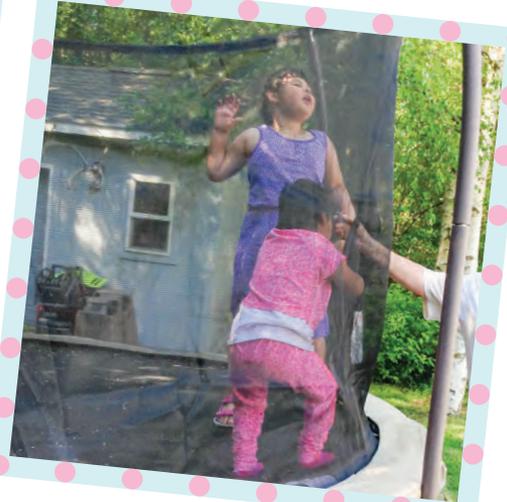




# Friendship in the sun



Tea parties on the deck



Jumping on the trampoline





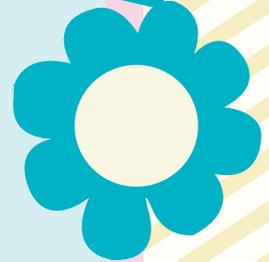
Girl talk



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!