March 4, 2009

Dear Deanna,

You beat me to it! I think the Angels were positively MAGNIFICENT last night too!!!! And so, I have been feeling just an overwhelming sense of gratitude to you, Pam, and your families, in particular, . . .to everyone who has put so much time and energy into Angels on Stage and the Wizard of Oz production. You really have given all of our kids the chance to be their best selves. They, and you, are incredible. . . just amazing.

Woody, Marjorie's Dad, and I, were of course most aware of Marjorie's success. . . AND, I have no doubt, the most in awe of her.

Until the last year and a half, Marjorie was fully mainstreamed with just resource support in school. Quite early on, I think, she learned to survive in the mainstream world by being a mouse in the corner, being as invisible as possible, being, as one of her teacher's at Stanbridge aptly put it, "wallpaper." It has been as if she figured that if she didn't misbehave, say anything at all for as long as possible, speak only when spoken to, no one would find out that she is different, and therefore worthy of odd looks and avoidance, at best. I knew this was going on, but I also had decided that Marjorie was really, by nature, a shy, introverted person anyway. Then, last night, I saw a part of Marjorie that I had decided a long time ago might have just been a stage in her development, a phase. Last night she was again the little girl she was at two and three--outgoing, exuberant, confident, her own person, someone who wanted to be and could be 'center-stage.' As I said, over the years she had become a quiet, shy, retiring person. And, I thought this was her true nature. I just thought these qualities had only been allowed to intensify, develop more fully, as a result of Marjorie's need, in the mainstream world, to go unnoticed. Last night, I found out that "the developmental stage" part of Marjorie is probably more the real Marjorie than anything else. Marjorie is not a shy, shrinking violet needing to be told what her every move should be. She really is more than a "Walter Mitty" character. She really is and has been all along, deep down, the enthusiastic, self-directed extrovert she was very early on. Thanks to Angels on Stage (YOU), last night, she became the original Marjorie, even better. Last night, feeling good about herself and being more grown up, she even seemed to be showing signs of wanting to give to others.

So, thank you again, Deanna, for giving Marjorie this opportunity to shine, for encouraging her be the person she really is and wants to be, deep down. You have provided her an atmosphere of acceptance and positive recognition that she has gotten nowhere else. You have told her that she is "OK" just the way she is, and she is shining because of it. Is it any wonder that every Saturday after Angels on Stage practice she got into the car saying, "I never want to stop going to Angels on Stage. I just love it!". . . Now I get it!

From the bottom of my heart, thank you, thank you, thank you. Sincerely, Dalen