



Angel Foundation®

November 2009: Angel of the Month

Nikki's Story



Nikki: An Angel on Her Shoulder

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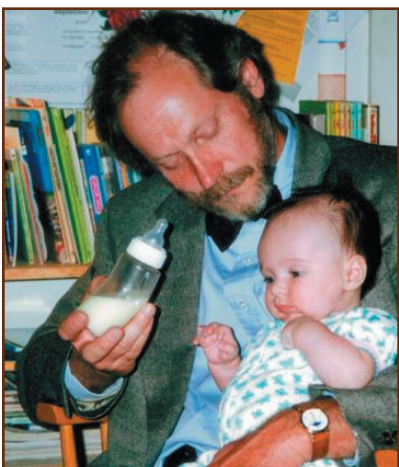
When Nikki was very young, she absolutely loved angels. She always chose angel-bear beanie babies, and collected angel figurines. One of her most favorite books was about Baby Angels. Her family found this incredibly fitting, though Nikki was not yet old enough to realize that her family knew she had her very own guardian angel.

Nikki was born on June 2nd, 1997 under the supervision of a midwife at a birthing center just as her older sister had been. Nikki's birth was uncomplicated, and she came home with her family just a few hours later. The family had already had one beautiful, healthy little girl and were thrilled to welcome Nikki as their second.

While pregnant, Nikki's mother Carrie had not agreed to any prenatal testing, but she did agree to the additional three drops of blood and \$25 charge for the additional newborn screening, which was not yet mandatory in Pennsylvania.

When Nikki was 13 days old, the family received a phone call that she had tested positive for Glutaric Aciduria Type 1, also known as GA-1. Their world suddenly changed. The family had to rush to the hospital, and had MRI's and blood and urine tests to confirm Nikki's diagnosis. But thankfully, due to the newborn screening diagnosis, Nikki is now a vivacious, healthy twelve year old girl. Her older sister often comments that she forgets Nikki even has GA-1.

Carrie believes in her heart that there is a plan for Nikki to eventually become a spokesperson for newborn screening and to light up the world in the way she lights up the lives of those who meet her. There are so many things that lined up; whether you believe it was fate, divine intervention, or a guardian angel, that brought Nikki to where she is today.



If she had been born in Connecticut, where Carrie and her husband had met, or Maine, where Carrie grew up, receiving the newborn screening diagnosis would not have been possible. As fate had it, Nikki was born in Pennsylvania, less than two hours away from Dr. Holmes Morton, a renowned physician in the areas of diagnosis and treatment of GA-1.

Dr. Morton has been Nikki's physician for the past 12 years, and saw her through her only crisis when she had a head injury at 15 months of age. She had to be flown to Lancaster by Medivac. Upon seeing Dr. Morton's face, Carrie knew Nikki would be okay, and she was.

The first few years of Nikki's life were incredibly stressful, but the pumping of breast milk, counting of calories and protein, and keeping her away from crowds and germs, all paid off immensely.



Nikki is an amazing young lady. She is a straight A student, plays the saxophone in the band, orchestra, and jazz bands, as well as dances and sings. She is very quiet when you first meet her, but she loves to be on stage and enjoys making her family laugh.

When Nikki appeared in the chorus concert last year, people came up and told her family that Nikki shined as though she was in a spotlight. In teacher conferences, all of her teachers always say the same thing: she is a delightful young lady. She is caring, helpful and kind.

When asked about how she feels about her diagnosis, Nikki responded incredibly maturely. She credits Dr. Morton with providing her with exceptional care and is grateful that she has been able avoid any complications of her disorder. She says that she sometimes still has questions about GA-1, and her mom explains to her anything she wants to know. Her diagnosis does not define her life by any means, and she fits in very well with her peers.

Her family is thankful for Nikki's guardian angel and hope that Nikki will use her special gift to help other children and families so that more children will have a chance at the life she has.

