

Thea's Accomplishments: Nothing Short of a Miracle

Thea entered first grade just after her seventh birthday. She was very excited about learning to read. Her parents had no reason to believe that she would have any trouble learning since she had flourished both academically and socially in kindergarten. Her accomplishments up to this point were astounding.

She was born prematurely and required oxygen and intravenous nutrition during her first three years of life. Early in her infancy, doctors said she was both blind and deaf. Later, she was properly diagnosed with dyspraxia and learned to communicate through sign language. She began speaking by her third year and each passing day she became closer and closer to being "on track" developmentally. When she entered school at the age of six, Thea seemed to be a perfectly normal kindergartner. Then came the first grade.

At the first parent-teacher conference, Thea's teacher informed her parents that there were signs of serious trouble. Thea was exhibiting learning, behavioral and attention problems. The problems were so significant her teacher did not know where one started and the other left off. Her parents were devastated. Even worse, Thea was very upset and became frustrated as she kept falling behind the other students. Her medical team and school began testing.

The test results indicated that Thea also had dyslexia and her frustration was creating the behavior problems. She was eventually placed on an individual education plan while beginning special education and occupational therapy in school. At this time, Thea's mother happened to attend a lecture by Carol Kranowitz, author of *The Out of Sync Child*. The free lecture was held at A Chance To Grow (ACTG). She had never heard of the organization and decided to take a tour after the lecture. "I was so impressed," commented Paula. "The very next week I scheduled an appointment for Thea at ACTG's vision department.

Thea received a complete eye exam and then a developmental evaluation in order to identify visual integration problems. The results clearly indicated that Thea had difficulty processing visual material. Thea's parents decided to enroll her in ACTG's vision therapy program.

She received individual vision therapy throughout the following summer and during the first several weeks of second grade. Paula recalls, "The staff that worked with Thea were incredible! They bonded with her and were able to bring out the best in her in a very nurturing way. She began to happily look forward to her vision therapy. Her gains were becoming more evident and each accomplishment of hers was celebrated along the way." Despite Thea's gains, her mother witnessed something even more amazing.

Thea, who had struggled to print her name legibly, began writing short stories for everyone to enjoy! Here was a young girl who had struggled to read the simplest of

primers, who began checking out chapter books from the library. As the new school year progressed, Thea was up to grade level work in all areas. "Her special education teacher told us that it was a special, but rare treat to release a young student from special education during the elementary years", remarked Paula. "The teacher told us that it is incredibly rare to have such a young child make as much progress as Thea had done in such a short amount of time." It was clear that the vision therapy played a major role in her success.

Her mother concluded by saying, "We are all so proud of Thea and so thankful for the people at A Chance To Grow. They have helped her become the audaciously, securely intelligent child that she is!"