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Student Spotlight

April 2016

Jeremiah Sanchez

The ABBIE School
Tucson, AZ



The beaming smile that shines through in Jeremiah Sanchez's photo speaks volumes for how much he has overcome in the short amount of time he has spent at The ABBIE School in Tucson, Arizona. As a child with Autism, his struggles in school and life have become harder over the years. However, a scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation has enabled him to receive an education tailored to his individual needs and he is soaring.

Jeremiah, currently in the 6th grade, is the oldest of four children. For most of his young life, his mother Amber Sanchez – who works as a waitress at Denny's restaurant – struggled as a single parent to make ends meet and provide for her children. (It was not until recently that she met and married her husband Gerardo, who also works at Denny's as a cook and now fulfills the role of a father figure to her children).

Although Amber enrolled Jeremiah in education programs at age 3, he had a difficult time in school from the start. He failed and had to repeat Kindergarten. He was bullied by classmates and had no friends. Amber figured that her son was just facing difficulties and that it was something they would deal with over time. However, as she started doing research on Autism, his behaviors and actions made more sense. She began to understand him better, and in turn, see how the educational environment he was in could help or hurt him.

Jeremiah's challenges began to deepen the older he got. He dealt with constant anxiety both in and out of school. Everyday life became harder for him and it spread to other areas of his home life.

“For Jeremiah and many other children like him, tasks that other people would consider simple, are hard,” Amber Sanchez says. “For example, making a bed is a challenge, but taking apart a car is easy. My son needed an environment that could help him learn the way his mind is built to learn, while giving him the educational and life skills necessary to become a successful adult.”

As she began to better understand her son’s needs, it became clear that the local public school was not a good fit for him. The final straw for Amber came during the beginning of Jeremiah’s sixth grade year, when he came home from school covered head to toe in red paint that other children had poured on him. In that moment, she knew she had to make an immediate change to save her son from a disastrous future. But finding the right school – and determining how to afford the tuition – was the challenge she faced.

As Amber searched for school options in the Tucson area, she came across The ABBIE School, which encompasses an educational style and specialty that could address Jeremiah’s unique needs. It was through the school that Amber also learned about the Lexie’s Law Program, a scholarship for special needs students available through the AAA Scholarship Foundation, which would help ease the financial burden and enable them to enroll Jeremiah at The ABBIE School.

Jeremiah was approved for the scholarship and enrolled at The ABBIE School in the fall of 2015. Within a couple months, Jeremiah underwent drastic changes. He went from a child who was constantly bullied by his peers to one who is able to form new friendships with his classmates. Once a child who was withdrawn, he performed – with a speaking role – in his first Christmas play in December 2015. His home life has improved greatly as well. Attending the school – where students are referred to as “scholars” – has made him feel special, a place that he gets to go where he has his own friends and attends classes that he enjoys.

The school has even helped stir up his own ambitions for the future and he now dreams of studying computer programming and coding, and inventing his own games.

For Amber, Jeremiah’s experience thus far has given her tremendous hope.

“I can now see a future for my son,” she says through a voice full of emotion and gratitude. “It goes beyond just overcoming his struggles in school. He is a different child now. One that has hope for attending college and having a career. I am grateful that he was given the opportunity to advance in life. None of this would have been possible without the AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors. Thank you!”

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. The average household income of families accepted to receive scholarships is \$23,559 for a family of four. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child to reverse inadequate learning and/or social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They

wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances, and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a tax credit (dollar for dollar in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada, and up to 90 percent in Pennsylvania). The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved Scholarship 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students through these Scholarship Tax Credit programs. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit www.AAAScholarships.org, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.