



As my daughter Mikayla prepares to graduate from preschool at Anchor Center for Blind Children in June, I have been thinking back on our time here.

I hope you'll take a few minutes and join me as I reflect on our precious journey, and the top three ways that Anchor Center has changed our lives.



Bryan & Mikayla when she first started in Anchor Center's Infant Program

1 WE ARE BLESSED AND GROWING.

Mikayla is our second child. When our first child was born, we were wheeled to the curb at the hospital and they said "Here 'ya go!" as they walked away. We were thinking, wait a minute, do we at least get an instruction manual? But, like most first-time parents, we figured it out as we went along.



When Mikayla was born, it was that same scary feeling of responsibility – and with the added medical unknown variables, things got really scary. Nowhere to turn. No one to relate to. ***But then, like a light guiding us, there was this beacon called Anchor Center. We suddenly had access to the entire library of "how-to" that is Anchor Center.***

Knowing that we were in the right place to learn how to best help Mikayla, a safe and nurturing place for her, we were able to breathe a bit easier and learn to enjoy all of the wonderful things that come with watching any child grow and develop.

We are blessed with a differently abled child and that is just as fun, new and exciting as life is with a typically abled child.

Mikayla & her mom, May

Today, she tracks items by sight, crawls around, and is getting into more things. She loves music and recently had a great time at the zoo. She's keeping me on my toes! I have loved seeing both her physical and cognitive growth, which I attribute directly to Anchor Center.

2 WE ARE EDUCATED AND EMPOWERED.

The Anchor Center staff – they ride on the wings of angels. They teach us how to interact with our children in a way that the child can relate and we can better understand their needs.

It might be as simple as learning the hand-under-hand introduction to items so the child doesn't feel controlled or frightened – or oral and motor building skills, ideas to work with tactile sensitivities, how to introduce new toys and items to Mikayla...the list goes on.

They helped me to understand that what our children know is normal for them. It is all they know. We, as parents, are the ones that need to adjust our way of thinking and adapt to life with a visually impaired person.

Anchor Center helps us shape our children's strength and teach them most things are possible. We just need to find a different way of doing it and the Anchor staff shows us how. (over please —————>)

Bryan Gives Back

When Mikayla started at Anchor Center as an infant, her father Bryan quickly realized just how important this special place would be to him and his family. Soon, Bryan began asking how he could help Anchor Center. How could he give back to a place that was giving so much to him?

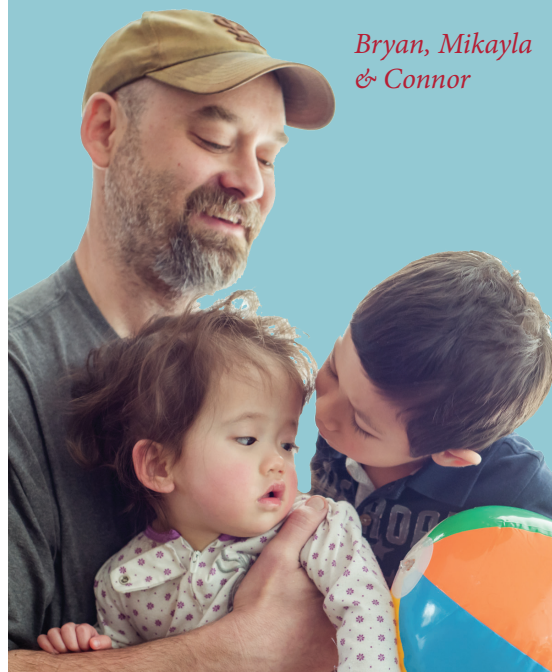
"I may not have much to give, but I give what I can," says Bryan, who has since been volunteering his time to Anchor Center as part of our small but mighty building maintenance team.

Bryan comes in on weekends and evenings, going through the checklist of items that need to be taken care of – always with a smile. Often times, his trusty assistant Connor, Mikayla's older brother, is by his side.

"Connor loves to help. Ever since his sister was born he's tried to help, and our fun thing to do as father and son is working on things together. He's just such a sweet soul."

When gratitude is expressed to Bryan for his volunteer service, he immediately turns that appreciation back to Anchor Center.

"Whenever things start to feel shadowed in a negative light, I think of Anchor Center; I think of odd jobs I've done there and I honestly feel appreciated. Being a part of Anchor Center gives me strength, hope, and a sense of love."



Bryan, Mikayla & Connor



Mikayla & Bryan at an Anchor Center field trip to the zoo

In our time at Anchor Center, I have also learned that we are our children's voice and we must speak up. We need to fight harder than most families for basic things.

Anchor Center has empowered me to find Mikayla's voice – I am her voice and you will hear me roar for my daughter.



Mikayla at Anchor Center

3 WE ARE HOME AND WITH FAMILY.

Anchor Center gave us a place where we truly feel like we belong - a home.

Anchor Center has helped us in ways that words, which are power, cannot even begin to describe. They showed us a life full of love, and a bigger feeling of family and togetherness than I ever knew would be possible when our little angel was introduced into our life.

All of the Anchor Center families have traveled this similar journey and we've done it together. We will forever be connected and I will forever consider them family.

Mikayla will graduate preschool this year and my heart aches at the thought of goodbye. I'll miss the people - staff and parents alike.

To us, Anchor Center has been a fundamental part of "learning how to live" in our own family, with no understanding, concept, measuring stick if you will, of what to do or how.

It's practically impossible for me to imagine what our lives would be like without Anchor Center.

They taught us to see life differently and provided us with all of the tools we'll need to continue this magical journey with Mikayla.

On behalf of Mikayla, my entire family, and every child and family served by Anchor Center, thank you so much for your gift of support and compassion.



Bryan & Mikayla with their "Anchor Family" and some of her fellow 2018 preschool graduates

Bryan Morgan, Mikayla's Dad

P.S. Had it not been for Anchor Center, and the generous gifts from donors, we might never have learned how to advocate for and best help Mikayla.

