

# Runner up ~ Sage Chalofsky

Hayden was found eligible for Early Intervention and began services in October 2016.

It's 8am on Monday morning. The doorbell rings. A huge grin spreads across my daughter's face. Avanthi is here for our weekly physical therapy session, and we both can't wait!

Eight months ago, my daughter Hayden couldn't stand independently or transition in and out of a seated position. As a 12 month old I knew this was unusual. I would sit her down to play and she would happily stay that way. I watched other children her age crawl and pull up on any object in front of them. I wondered why Hayden had no desire to move like them. At Hayden's 12 month check-up I asked the pediatrician if I should contact Early Intervention. When he told us absolutely, I was scared. I didn't want my little girl to need help. I just wanted her to be like other kids her age. Looking back now, I realize there was nothing to be afraid of. It because of that single phone call that my daughter is achieving so much today. Now, at 20 months old, Hayden crawls, stands, pulls to stand, transitions in and out of sitting, climbs up the stairs, walks with assistance, and does laps around our coffee table! She is moving and grooving and it is all because of the wonderful individualized attention that her physical therapist Avanthi has given her.

Hayden is currently working on balancing and standing on one foot so that she can walk independently. Avanthi gives Hayden several exercises to work on this one skill so that if she gets frustrated with one maneuver, she can still be successful with another. She looks around the house and uses what is available. She has her holding my hands and walking over a roll of wrapping paper. She has her balance on our cushioned ottoman. She has her kicking balloons and holding the banister to help her walk up the steps. We sing "Ring-Around-The-Rosy" and walk in circles. Although each movement seems different to Hayden, she is working on balancing and switching her weight from one leg to the other. Mixing up exercises like this makes Hayden think therapy is a game and not work. Additionally, doing short repetitions of about three of each allows her to stay focused and not get bored.

Avanthi also has me take turns with leading the exercises and not simply watching her. This way I can feel confident and know how to best help Hayden once she leaves. I truly appreciate that she takes the time to show me how to not only be the parent, but the therapist. She and I both understand how important it is for Hayden to practice. Hayden and I have both learned so much as a result of physical therapy and we are grateful for everything Avanthi has taught us so far. I couldn't imagine where Hayden would be without these services and I am eager to see what she will be doing another six months from now.