

Rising Tide School

Letter from a Parent

This testimonial is from a parent at the Segó Lily School, our sister school in Utah. Names have been changed at the request of the family. Enjoy!

A note from a Dad.

My daughter Anna graduated from Segó Lily in December. What a long amazing trip it's been.

When Anna came to me early last fall and said she was ready to move on, that she had gotten what she needed from high school and was ready to join the world of adults, I was brought to tears. For you see, Anna was at one time, a disabled child. She was diagnosed with both Absences Epilepsy and Autism. Until a few years ago the idea that she would be ready for the world let alone taking care of herself or having a job was inconceivable. Her disability made it so that she could not learn. From an early age we used tutors, therapists, full-time aides in the classroom, private and public school, and all of the special Ed that the public schools provide.

Until about 5th grade Anna was a very happy, tough kid, with spark and gleam in her eyes. Unfortunately she still could not read, spell, write, or do any math. She could not tell time nor understand what a certain time

meant, although she was able to speak and understand, and had language skills above grade level. On first meeting Anna, she appeared normal. One would only notice that she seemed a little different, but she still had great trouble learning.

After a very traumatic 7th grade in public school, with all of the associated teasing, bullying, and hopelessness that comes with a disability, she was done. She was depressed, angry, temperamental, and hopeless. I could go on and on. She hadn't smiled in a year. She told us that she was not going to go to school anymore. Seriously, running away or worse were her options if we did not believe her. We had looked at all school options in Utah and even were looking at moving out of state to find her a place to go. Home schooling seemed like the only option.

An article in the Salt Lake Tribune mentioned that a new school with a different philosophy was starting in Salt Lake. I was on the phone with Jen that day. After speaking with her I was very impressed. Her vision, expertise, and love of

kids and their learning swayed me. We took Anna to see Segó Lily as we had done with many other schools. She would not even get out of the car. After hearing about the school and philosophy and meeting Jen she agreed to try it for 8th grade.

The first few weeks were hard. She spent most of her time curled up on the couch, but she went to school every day. Within a few months, she had gotten into the swing of things. She started talking about her day at school. Anna didn't come home in tears every day and actually looked forward to school some mornings. She started to smile!!! The old wonderful Anna was starting to reappear.

Over the next few years Anna started to really assert herself. She was gaining self-confidence, joking and kidding with kids and staff. She was happy, healthy, and was starting to learn. I was now going into parent mode. Was this the right school for her? No classes? No curriculum? How will this be for her as she gets older? I started flipping out. Was this just teenage daycare? Anna seemed to spend all day watching TV. I had many

meetings with the staff and they told me to have faith. Anna was making much more progress than I thought. I almost pulled her out many times. This was so foreign. Thank goodness I didn't.

This is the important part. Anna came home one day and started to talk about ancient Egypt. She had seen a DVD on Egypt and was excited. I asked her if she wanted me to get some more DVDs and she lit up. I started buying her videos on many subjects and she ate them up. Anna had found a way to learn. Textbooks and lectures did not work for her but visual, audio, and hands on did. Wow. Anna's learning exploded. She now started using the computer. Every day and most nights were spent looking for info on her Mac book or watching TV. The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and National Geographic were her new best friends.

Sego Lily allowed Anna to figure out for herself how to learn. She took it and ran. Sego Lily gave her the tools that will serve her well for a lifetime. She no longer considers herself to be disabled. She has discovered her ability to adapt and adjust to outside influences. SHE HAS LEARNED TO READ. I don't know how. She did not spend her days in English

class. Anna can handle basic math, balance her checkbook, tell time, and keep schedules. If there is something she wants to know she can go out and find it on her own. I sometimes call her Google Girl. Her ability to research is amazing. There is no way she would have progressed to this level of independence and maturity at a regular school. I am not sure she would even have survived. Sego Lily gave her the tools for life and maybe even saved it.

During her first year at Sego Lily her mom and I used to say, "Well, she won't be a rocket scientist but at least she will survive". We were only right about the rocket part. Today you will find Anna working in the Paleontology Lab at the Natural History Museum at the University of Utah. After finishing her training she is now a full-fledged member of the team. She is living her passion and is looking at going on and getting a degree in Paleontology. I am more proud of her than anything else in my life.

For Anna to have made it this far took tenacity and her unique outlook on life. But most of all, it took Jen, Kyle, Craig, Tara, Katee, Hollie, and all the other staff, parents, and kids at

Sego Lily. The school and family that is Sego Lily gave her the gift of success and for that I will be forever deeply grateful.

--Anna's proud dad