

Riverside CARE Awards

Alana Carroll *Family Support Center*



There's an incredible light and joyful brightness in the smile of a little boy whose picture graces several of Riverside's brochures and webpages. It's Caiden Carroll, who might not be here without the unstoppable force of love and determination that is his mother, Alana Carroll.

Alana is the mother of not only Caiden, but six children – four are her own, and two others she gathered into her family when her brother, their father, passed away. That in itself is heroic, but there's more to the story.

Caiden was born with a very rare genetic disorder called Angelman's Syndrome. It affects the nervous system, causing seizures and developmental delays, affecting walking and speaking. When Caiden was five, almost overnight he began having continuous seizures, increasing in strength. He lost his ability to walk and speak, and deteriorated so rapidly that doctors sent him home with palliative care.

That was something his mother could not accept. Immediately she began researching, calling, turning over every stone for something – anything – that might help her son. She came across a controversial treatment that had helped others with seizures. With nothing to lose, she brought Caiden to try it. There was an amazing and immediate difference, and within two days Caiden was up and walking. Over time his seizures decreased, and Caiden was his happy, smiling self again.

Impressed with her advocacy and unflagging determination, his doctors asked Alana to be a contact for others in this bleak situation, and she receives calls from desperate families from all over the world. With all of her responsibilities, Alana still makes sure each of her children is loved and cared for. Caiden, now 11, and his family are a huge part of the Riverside Family Support Center in Woburn. And we are so grateful for their presence.