

# Michelle "Mischa" Kennedy



Mischa Kennedy, the Elks 1995 Theme child. graduated from Faith Christian High School May 30th. 2008. Our family knows this is due in large part to the Elks Major Project. Mischa received therapy for many years, through 2007 as an Elks client.

Mischa was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, left side hemiplegia, and a rare brain disorder, schizencephaly in May 1991. Schizencephaly is a condition where there are clefts in the brain and Mischa's are on the right side so the left side of her body is involved. The doctor who diagnosed her suggested we might want to find a facility that could provide long-term care, as Mischa would always be dependent on others for her needs. We did not agree with her opinions and a second doctor offered a wait and see approach, which we found hope in.

Living in Coalinga left Fresno as the only option for Physical and Occupational Therapy until the second doctor mentioned the Elks. Well, I walked into Coalinga Lodge #1613 and said "I need help for my daughter". That was all it took to get Don Dapelo's phone number and start a program that was to shape Mischa's life. The therapy you provide has helped Mischa reach goals that we could have never thought possible 17 years ago.

Her accomplishments are yours. too. These accomplishments include walking, cooking, driving, earning a letter in track and field for shot put, making the high school honor roll with a 3.6 GPA, and her plans to attend West Hills College and continue on to Fresno Pacific University to earn a degree in history. Her goal in life is to work at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

As Theme Child, Mischa attended many special events in her honor and we are grateful for all of them. However, we are even more grateful to the Elks for the therapy that continued after this, year after year. For this, we thank every member that contributed to the Major Project, putting out the Purple Pigs or assisting at Lodge events; you are part of something that changes lives. I must also thank the tireless therapists that you provided week after week, who came despite bad weather, valley heat and cranky Mischa. They were never deterred. Barbara Huey. Kathy Yamamoto. and especially Judy Wong...you all are remarkable!



To just say "thank you" does not seem adequate. So I ask all of you to please share in Mischa's victories and realize that you made this possible through your time, effort, and hard work on the Major Project.

Mischa's Mother

*NOTE: I intended to write a story about Mischa and her experience as the Theme Child and to show our members one of the success stories from the program we support each year. Mischa's mother gave me the article at the right time and I decided that I could not improve on it. I remember the night Mischa and her Mother came to Coalinga Lodge. I will always remember her Mother telling her story and I will always remember the tears of joy going down my face like many others in the room.*

*Johny A. Albrecht*