

Mathilda Ljung – Au Pair of the Year

Mathilda is our 6th Au Pair and after having 5 amazing ladies we are a hard family to dazzle yet she has blown us away. Mathilda is intelligent, kind, caring, thoughtful and calm under pressure. In short, she is an incredible Au Pair for our family, especially our 9-year old twins, Sydney and Joshua.

Mathilda is always up for games, or baking, or playing in the backyard. She comes up with fun outings to bowling alleys or the library or the beach. While these attributes are admirable, it is how she has helped us deal with our special needs daughter that has truly distinguished her.

Mathilda knew that Sydney had Cerebral Palsy when she agreed to be our Au Pair. However, at that time we believed the day-to-day impact to Mathilda to be small as Sydney was thriving in a typical-kid environment. Between accepting our family's offer to be an Au Pair and starting with our family a lot changed. Sydney began an extremely restrictive diet, and also started to fall behind academically – it was a stressful situation and we had no idea how our new Au Pair would meet these new challenges. Mathilda has been a champion – she helps to manage Sydney's diet better than anyone in the family, and even comes up with fun low-carb recipes for Sydney like chocolate coconut balls and brownies! She has also been a tremendous resource academically, patiently working with Sydney to help her learn at a more realistic pace given some of her setbacks. Sydney also responds well to physical therapy and Mathilda has been an expert in "lefty games," encouraging Sydney to work more effectively with her left side. Essentially, Mathilda entered a situation that could have been stressful and challenging and instead she became a resource to keep our household manageable and fun at the same time.

With everything going on with Sydney, Mathilda has also won the heart of our son, Josh. Josh sometimes receives less attention than his sister given his easier path in life but Mathilda always ensures Josh gets the attention and time he needs and she spends time playing games with him and spurring on his curiosity. Josh is competitive and loves to play games and Mathilda is always a willing partner – teaching him new activities, working on his sportsmanship, and challenging his strong intellect.

Mathilda has also become a fantastic family member to the rest of us – not only us (her house parents), but our dog Leo (who adores her!), our parents (Mima & Poppy) and our local friends. Mathilda is warm and engaging and likes to meet new people and participate in all the fun activities in our household – from intense domino games, to celebrating Thanksgiving, to learning about our Jewish customs. Of course she still plans out lots of time to experience the US and spends as much time as she can in New York City – she navigates the city like a native at this point!

Mathilda is more than our Au Pair – she is a friend and a member of our family and we are so glad she came in to our lives when she did. Her impact with Sydney is life-changing and we know we also have a friend for life in Mathilda, our clear choice for Au Pair of the Year!