

TOP: Joey and his Registered Nurse Donna W., just before they soared into the sky. Donna held the “bagging” equipment that made Joey’s Ferris wheel adventure possible. (Bagging is shorthand for squeezing a self-inflating bag to provide ventilation to people who are not breathing or not breathing adequately.) Joey has since passed away, but his mom keeps in touch with BAYADA, and Donna is still with the Pediatric Cherry Hill (New Jersey) office.

BELOW: Portia in the 1990s, with her irresistible smile captured in a snapshot by Marion Fiero. Portia has since passed away.



Like other kids

Pediatric clients have an especially strong grip on BAYADA heartstrings. Their stories could fill an entire book! These two are among the most memorable.

Portia rides a bike

Portia faced immense challenges. But despite using a ventilator and suffering from significant multiple health problems, she wanted to be like other kids. “Portia had a huge personality and a lot of courage,” remembers Marion Fiero, Division Director of Home Health in Philadelphia, who’s been with BAYADA since 1979. A true “girly girl,” Portia loved having nurses braid her hair and paint her nails. Often she demanded it, but always with a cheerful grin. Finding her hard to resist, nurses typically gave in.

One day, Portia wanted to ride a bike—definitely not an easy request to fill for a child who uses a ventilator. But her nurse said she’d find a way. And she did. In the form of training wheels and 100 feet of medical tubing! “The nurse said, ‘Okay, you can only go as far as this roll of tubing will go.’ She then ran breathlessly behind Portia, letting out the tubing as Portia pedaled along,” Marion explains. “This little girl was the best. Oh, she just loved being able to ride a bike and experience what other children do.”



Joey in the sky with BAYADA

Susan (Susie) Ecker Sterner, CSN, BA, loved Joey, a boy with dwarfism who had restrictive lung disease. She started caring for him when he was six and found him to be one of the sweetest clients she’d ever met.

In the 1990s, kids with his condition were typically homebound—their electronic equipment kept them inside. Portable ventilators weren’t available yet. But Joey’s mother wanted him to have the best possible quality of life, so she and Susie took turns hand-ventilating or “bagging” him in public, including at school.

“When he first started going to school, it was only one class for an hour, just so he could socialize and meet the children. He loved it,” says Susie, who joined BAYADA in 1991 and is now a Senior Transitional Care Manager. Her job is to transition patients home from Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, one of the world’s most renowned pediatric facilities.

Joey’s sense of exploration knew no bounds. When a carnival came to town, he wanted to ride the Ferris wheel! Susie felt some trepidation—the boy’s life would be in BAYADA’s hands, 100 feet above the ground. But with emergency equipment at hand, Joey’s nurse and his mom gave him the experience he craved. “We bagged him the whole time,” Susie says. “He did great.” 🌸