

THE MIRACLE

Ellen, Artur's therapist, had come up with the idea of him using only one crutch. He was clearly working hard at it and we noticed that his balance, along with his confidence, seemed to be improving. Like all other children, Artur had lots of energy and he couldn't be quiet for a single minute. He had developed an unexplainable affinity for vacuum cleaners, and he would occasionally put his crutch aside and hold on to one of his Bissells while using it for balance.

In 2009, Eimard and Andreza Fernandes had come from Brazil to Pittsburgh with their son, Joao Victor, who was on the waiting list for a liver transplant. Joao also had MSUD, albeit a less severe case than Artur's. We knew the Fernandes from our days when Artur was hospitalized in Brazil. With Soraya's help, they got an apartment at the Ronald McDonald House right beside ours. Artur loved to go to their apartment. Beyond his vacuum cleaners, he loved to pretend to be a firefighter. In the hallway outside our door, there was a fire extinguisher and Artur loved to play near it.

It was nearly 8:00 PM on Friday, August 28, 2009. Artur was playing firefighter with Vinicius in the hallway. It was almost bedtime, so Soraya yelled to them, "You guys, it's time to get ready for bed. Go to the bathroom and brush your teeth."

Soraya and I continued watching *Law & Order*. Vinicius came in quickly and headed for the bathroom. A few seconds later, we sensed a shadow passing behind us. It couldn't be Vinicius; he had finished in the bathroom and was playing with his Legos. We turned to look, but couldn't believe it. Artur was walking toward the bathroom on his own, without a crutch!

At this, Soraya whispered to me before I could react, "Shhhh! Let him go to the bathroom, then let's see if he comes out without needing help."...