



Roxbury Elementary School

751 West Hill Road, Stamford, CT 06902
Phone: (203) 977-4287 Fax: (203) 977-4615
www.Roxburyschool.org

March 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

Our sincere thanks to Shawnee Knight and Tina Kramer for making the following recent success story happen.

Twelve year old Sharif came to this country from Morocco when he was in 3rd grade. To his credit, in two short years he became fluent in English and performed at or near grade level. However, his relative success in school belied how difficult it was to be a new immigrant. Sharif desperately wanted to fit in and be popular, but he struggled socially because he had not yet acclimated to life in the United States. His parents did not speak English and as a result, Sharif's life outside of school was quite insular. He worried way more than most boys his age, especially about his parents. Although they were healthy, Sharif feared he would be orphaned if they ever get sick. What was most notable about Sharif however was that food was at the center of both his anxiety and sense of security.

Sharif often asked teachers for food and said that his Mom did not have the money to buy the special snacks he saw other students eating in the cafeteria. Fortunately, he was part of the federal free lunch program, which also entitled him to receive a free hot breakfast at school each morning. Unlike your typical picky eater, Sharif was game to try anything and usually loved it! So when Filling in the Blanks offered to partner with Roxbury, it was no surprise that Sharif was the first to return his permission form. Before the weekend food was distributed for the first time, Sharif double and triple-checked that he was "on the list." Then, on the big day, he stopped by the office to ask what time "it was happening"! In this regard, Sharif was not unlike the dozens of other students enrolled in the program. Each Friday brings the thrill of a lifetime!

A couple of months after the program started, something quite unexpected and wonderful happened to Sharif. After several successive Fridays of taking home his very own bag of food and fresh fruit, he became noticeably calmer. He stopped fretting about all kinds of things, from school to friends to his parents' health. He also stopped begging for food. Clearly, being part of the program satisfied a physiological need, but it obviously satisfied an emotional one too. Never doubt that removing one small worry from a child's life can change his entire outlook.

Sincerely,

Sarah Arnold, LCSW
Social Worker
Roxbury Elementary School