

I am the proud and happy mother of two boys. Soon after I finished college I had my oldest boy and 23 months later I had my youngest one. As months passed by I noticed something was not right with my little one. I kept comparing milestones of my oldest son with him. I would take him almost weekly to his pediatrician trying to confirm my concerns. But no, he would say "every child is different, give him time". We moms have that sense that would tell us when something is not right and when we should act immediately, and so I did. In August of 2000, I moved from Puerto Rico to Orlando, Florida seeking a professional, second opinion for my son. As soon we moved, he was diagnosed with PDD-NOS and then eventually with cortical dysplasia with autism features. The cortical dysplasia caused my son to develop a seizure disorder. Once he was diagnosed, he started therapy and early intervention services.

The road ahead did not look easy but I decided that I would do everything within my power to provide the best for my son in order to help him reach his fullest potential. Since he started school I became his advocate, there has not been a school that he attended, that I have not worked for. I started working as a volunteer at his school and eventually I was offered a job as an ESE teacher assistant for OCPS. In 2004 I started working as a teacher assistant for a charter school specialized in education for students with special needs and a few months later I was offered a teaching position. Since then I have been teaching students with special needs and varying exceptionalities. Teaching is my passion and is something I truly enjoy. It became my priority to expand my knowledge in teaching techniques in order to keep providing an excellent education to my students. In 2016, I completed my M.S. Degree in Education.

In 2007 I was offered a teaching position at Maitland Academy. I was honored to work with the Kristen Peterson Co-founder of Maitland Academy and could not agree more with their vision. As a parent I personally experienced all the obstacles to find a place for a child with special needs that would fulfill your academic, sensory and, therapy expectations. I personally knew both of them, Kristen was my mentor when we both worked for the same school years before and Tonina was my son's OT since he was 2 years old. I felt very excited to be part of such a great team.

For the last seven years I've seen how my son has bloomed into a teenager and all the progress he has made. Maitland Academy has provided to my son with a nurturing and safe environment and an education of excellence. Kristen and I are all parents of teenagers with

special needs that attended Maitland Academy. As parents we know that their needs change as they are getting closer to adulthood. It is my responsibility as a parent, but also as an educator to make what is necessary to fulfill my son and my students' needs. For that reason we have come together one more time and decided to give life to Celandine Life-Prep Academy. The future for my son continues to be promising now that we have come together as parents again to make sure we continue meeting the needs of our children.