YOUNG FARRAH IS ‘ONE IN A BILLION’

Mother says thanks to staff who helped disabled child take her very first steps

BY MICHAEL DEVLIN

THE mother of a three-year-old disabled girl from Slin Mills has attributed her daughter’s very first steps to the ‘massive’ help she received from a Strabane preschool facility.

Ciara McCloskey (29) revealed this week that young Farrah, who was born with a shortened femur bone in her leg, had been unable to walk before she entered Strabane Sure Start last September.

However, almost as soon as her young daughter joined her playmates and met her teachers, Ciara noted an increase in confidence. This, in turn, eventually led to her taking those first few tentative steps.

Farrah, who has one leg shorter than the other, had previously little interest in wearing her prosthesis leg, but is now up on her feet and walking.

This week, mum Ciara admitted it was an emotional day when the three-year-old took those first steps.

“Before, it was handy for Farrah to just crawl,” Ciara explained. “She didn’t want to wear her leg. I suppose it was just wee phases she was going through.

“But then, going to Sure Start seeing what the other children were doing really helped. They were helping her, bringing over her wee walker and holding her hand.”

She continued, “It was so emotional. When she took a few steps down at the school they were near in tears.

“The girls at Sure Start, I couldn’t thank them enough.

“I even said to them, they were just like wee mummies, I can’t praise them enough.”

FULL STORY SEE PAGE 6  Farrah McCloskey took her first steps thanks to Strabane Sure Start.

LEAVING SCHOOL THIS SUMMER?

Craft are offering new and exciting Apprenticeships which could lead to fantastic opportunities for anyone ages 16 & over.

WATCH THIS SPACE!
Farrah McCloskey’s one in a billion

A local mum reveals her daughter’s amazing first steps

For me, my worst nightmare was sending her to school. I was afraid she was going to get bullied or the weans were going to look at her differently.

Just like any other mum, Clara McCloskey (28) fully admits to being apprehensive for her three-year-old daughter Farrah, prior to her starting a pre-school programme. As with any parent there is always that initial fear of losing your most cherished possession to take those first few tentative steps towards eventual independence.

However unlike a great many other mums or dads, Clara’s fear for Farrah had a more tangible element and those first few tentative steps would become a watershed episode in the McCloskey family.

Farrah, an otherwise healthy, happy and smiling child, was born with a shortened femur bone in her leg with the result that she now has one leg longer than the other. In turn, her walking abilities have developed that bit slower than other children’s, as one might expect when a toddler is supposed to use a prosthetic leg. In fact, Farrah’s third birthday had come and gone and she still hadn’t taken those first few tentative steps.

“I had thought, please not another birthday without her walking,” Clara recalls. “But then you can’t rush it either.”

And then, after Farrah joined in with some 18 or 11 other children her own age at Strabane Sure Start, she was very soon up and walking.

“It was massive for her,” Clara beams, referring to Sure Start.

“She was no bother going to school either, she loved it. There was never a day that she didn’t want to go. That start she was helped up it but then she started wanting to do it herself. All the other children were doing it, so she wanted to do it too. “It wasn’t long after that she took her very first steps on her own. Just two, here at home. Then, I think it was a week or two later she was gradually doing more and becoming more confident. She just kept going.”

“I was so emotional. When she took a few steps down at the school they were nearly in tears. I had said to them that I was so glad she walked for them. That was kind of an end goal for them too, it was worth more to them than anything, seeing her walking.”

Clara says that she and her husband Patrick now firmly believe that little Farrah’s attendance at Strabane Sure Start helped her develop her walking, more so that if she had stayed at home.

“Because it’s a smaller group too, it probably helped too,” Clara continues. “The other children took to her too and that added to her confidence. They were so, so good to her. The girls (at Sure Start), I couldn’t thank them enough. I even said to them, they were just like wee mummies. I can’t praise them enough.”

“She has a wee walker but hopefully, she’ll not be using it for much more. She has a wee limp. She has to swing her leg out round, so she doesn’t walk like anybody else.”

Although retaining that same apprehension that other mums and dads know only too well, Clara says she’s now confident Farrah will continue to develop her walking when she attends Strabane’s Naiscoil after the summer holidays.

“It has definitely been great for her to be out with other children,” she said. “And the children she’s with now, she’ll be with until primary seven.

“Not a lot of people have what she has, I think the odds were something like one in a billion. So there’s nobody here we could even talk to. But she’s getting there. They (doctors) are doing so much now, like they’re even growing bones. Down in the line there’s a chance they might be able to grow her a femur bone. Her feet and everything else is working fine, it’s just the bone. She doesn’t know any better. If it would be different if she was walking and then lost her leg. She doesn’t know any better and that’s why she’s adapting so well.

“She’s getting there.”

The McCloskey family would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all the staff at Sure Start including, Margaret, Rosie, Mary, Bernadine and Sharon.