As a reporter, there are stories that leave a lasting impression on you. They are the ones that stick with you long after the interview is over, the story has been typed and the paper has hit the streets.

I encountered one of those stories last week when I was given a tour of the Magnolia Speech School in Jackson. With three Yazoo County children being students there, I wanted to see the daily routine at the school up close and personal.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I walked through the door of the school that caters to children with communication disorders. I had a few assumptions, but when I entered the school...I was blown away.

It just seemed brighter inside. The walls were covered with vibrant paint and classic storybook characters. An aroma of the day's lunch floated through the air. Children were heading into their classrooms with smiles covering their faces. And parents were scattered in the lobby on their way to a piano recital.

And then it dawned on me. Many of these children may have never expected to be able to speak, hear or communicate. I saw many of the children with hearing aids, cochlear implants and other communicative devices.

But most of these children were talking to their teachers as they walked down the hall. A few were making sounds to indicate what they wanted. Bottom line...they were communicating. And best of all, they were smiling.

It hit me like a ton of bricks as I made my way to visit with the first Yazoo County child. Even though these children are faced with a mountain of obstacles, they are happy. They are making progress, and they were proof that miracles do happen.

My husband Jason and I were blessed that both of our children were born healthy with no physical or mental disabilities. Realizing our blessing came full force during that tour of Magnolia.

Gina Robinett, a five year girl, has lived with hearing aids for the majority of her short life. But yet she was shouting out the names of colors that day on my tour. And what stuck out to me was her smile. This little girl had the sweetest grin.

That tiny little girl really impressed me with her sheer happiness. Despite the challenges that come with her situation, she was excited and motivated to be there that day.

And then I met Brady Scott. He was diagnosed with severe hearing loss a few years ago. But then I caught him singing in his classroom. A child who was told may not hear or

communicate was singing like a songbird.
He also had that contagious smile that instantly made me crack one of my own.
And then there was Chloe McGinty, a little girl labeled “the diva” by her class. She was diagnosed as being profoundly deaf at only eight days old.
Showing off her favorite pair of shoes, she made her way to the table where she completed her exercises with flying colors. The infant who was born deaf was telling her teacher the sounds of different farm animals.
And, you guessed it, she had a smile that would light up a whole room.
They are doing some wonderful and incredible things at Magnolia. I encourage any parent in these same situations to contact the school.
But those three children also taught me to have hope in any situation. They have such determination and courage. And their parents are amazing for going that extra step to ensure their children have a bright future.
Most importantly, I was touched by their smiles. To this day, I can see their grins.
I sometimes take for granted the things in my life. But after my trip to Magnolia and seeing the children there, I was reminded of the many blessings in life.
That evening, I threw my house shoes on and made my way outside to water the plants. But I stopped to watch our baby Elsie play with her picnic set. Looking up, she made a series of babbles and baby talk. And then she smiled.
The plants can wait, and I sat myself down to a picnic.
Later, I was heating up a hot dog for our son James. He was under my feet, playing with his trucks.
“I love you,” I said, looking down at him.
“Love you too, Momma,” he said, with a grin.
After my trip at Magnolia, it hit me how special it is to hear those three little words. What if those three words weren’t a possibility?
I guess I would smile and keep trying.