

Children's Center News

Summer 2019



Child Spotlight: Liam

"As soon as we visited the Children's Center, we knew that this was the best place for Liam," said his mom, Anntoinette Brown.

She said, "Everyone was so welcoming during the tour. No one flinched or gawked at his behaviors in the hallways." She said he was treated as just

another child with his own set of strengths and challenges.

Liam Brown was diagnosed with disruptive,

impulse control and conduct disorders when he was two years old. He promptly began receiving in-home support through Child Development Services and transitioned to the Children's Center when he turned three.

"Liam was very aggressive and destructive at that point," said his mother. She said he hit, bit, kicked, and scratched as well as

threw and broke things around him. He was nonverbal and communicated solely through grunting, screaming, and crying.

"We were all frustrated because he couldn't tell us and we couldn't figure out what he needed," said his father, Adam Brown.

Liam began receiving special education but teachers and staff soon realized he needed more

plays safely by himself or with friends."

Liam will be graduating from the Children's Center and transitioning to Chelsea Elementary School in August. His mother said that she will be sad to see him leave the Center but feels so much better about the change.

"He has learned the fundamental skills needed to be successful

and as self-sufficient as possible later in life," she said.

Brandin attributes Liam's success to him receiving

all of his needed services in one location in combination with his parents advocating for his needs and remaining heavily involved in his treatment.

"I don't even want to think about where we would be without the Children's Center," said his mother. His father said, "I am really just so thankful for what they have done for Liam and our entire family."



Where Are They Now?

Every year, many children graduate from programs at the Children's Center and move on to kindergarten in the public school system. And every year, some of these children and families lose touch. The "Hummingbird Grad Moms" did not want this to become a reality for their families.

"We had all left and lost touch but knew we didn't want to," said Jen Williams, one member of the group. So, Jen, Jennica, Susan, and Victoria created a group on Facebook in order to stay connected beyond the Children's Center.

All from different towns and backgrounds, these four mothers had never crossed paths before. However, their children would soon bring them together in a way they would never expect. Each boy was diagnosed with autism and referred for services at the Center.

Jen has a son named Carter. At the age of only two years old, he was diagnosed with autism and began participating in the hummingbirds classroom.

"The staff were not just Carter's teachers, they were mine too. I needed to learn autism as much as Carter needed to learn everything," said Jen.

"By the time he graduated the program, he was a different kid,"

said Jen. She said he could talk, go to school happily, and trust and go to multiple people.

Jennica has a son named Warren. Warren has an autism diagnosis and "a speech delay that had impacted his ability to communicate, particularly with people outside the family, but even with us too," said his mom. Warren also entered the hummingbirds classroom.



"He really came out of his shell at the Center. He improved his speech greatly, he became more willing to try new things and he was prepared for public school beyond my expectations," said Jennica

Susan Ross has a son named Harrison. He was diagnosed with autism at fourteen months old. She said he didn't really play with her or other children and didn't speak for a long time. "I feared he may never," she said.

While attending the hummingbirds classroom, Harrison learned to play, speak, and cope with frustration. Today, he has almost completed third grade and has come a long way.

Victoria Nattress has a son named Tristyn who was also diagnosed with autism. Krista Smith, hummingbirds classroom teacher, said that he improved his social skills while in the

program. She said he even knew how to spell each of his friends' and teachers' names.

As Carter, Warren, Harrison and Tristyn became friends in the hummingbirds classroom, these four mothers quickly developed friendships as well.

"It's so nice to have people that know what you are going through with hardly any explanation," said Jen. So, they decided to stay in touch after graduation.

The mothers said that the online group allows them to bounce thoughts off each other, vent to those who really get it and schedule play dates for their children.

They each still speak fondly of their experiences at the Children's Center.

"The Center may be out of my daily life now but the organization and the staff will always be in my heart as I look at my Carter each and every day," said Jen.

Staff Spotlight: Nicole Trask

Nicole Trask began working as a behavioral health professional and educational technician at the Children's Center almost four years ago.

With a background in foster care, she had experience working with children with behavioral challenges and said she knew she could be a help at the Center.

"It was nice to be able to bring past experiences while also learning new ways of managing situations with young children," said Nicole.

She has worked in practically every program at each location. She enjoys having the opportunity to work in each classroom because the experiences provide her with the chance to learn more about working with children. She said that each program and location certainly has its own culture, which also depends on the group of children.

Amber Stubbs, clinician for the behavior support program, said that

Nicole is always willing to lend a helping hand to whomever may need one.

Nicole appreciates that each day is different, a

fresh start with new experiences in store.

Regardless of the program or location, she said

"there is no better feeling than starting the morning with hugs and smiles from children excited to work with me for the day."

Despite her versatility, she said that her passion remains in busy bees, a

classroom in the behavioral support program for children with the most high-end behaviors and often traumatic histories. "I work to assure them that this is a safe and nurturing place for any emotions they are feeling," she said.

Nicole relies heavily on her team and appreciates being able to lean on them for help. "I can count on them in situations without even speaking a word," she said.

The most rewarding part of the job for her has always been seeing a child progress and graduate on to bigger and better things. "You know you are helping a child's life for the better," she said.

Amber said that Nicole always gives her best to each child and truly takes pride in her work. She is a valuable employee who is highly committed to the Children's Center.



Carter



Warren



Harrison



Tristyn



General Updates

Graduation at our Children's Center sites happens next month; August 21st in Farmington, August 22nd in Skowhegan, and August 23rd in Augusta. This year we're graduating thirty three children—all of them heading off to new challenges and triumphs in kindergarten.

Many of our graduates came to us several years ago. Some have been coming to our Augusta site since they were weeks old. And for all of them, and all of us working with them, this time of year is bittersweet. It's hard to let them go.

We're proud, sad, happy, and grateful to have had this time with them. Their achievements in so many instances are absolutely amazing and inspiring.

Thank you, staff, for giving so much of yourselves to make that happen. Parents and caregivers, thank you for the privilege of working with your children. We're going to miss them very much.




Jeff Johnson, Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE


5th Annual Children's Center Auction

Saturday, September 28th
5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Governor Hill Mansion






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