



The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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250 John Scott Highway

Steubenville, Ohio
43952
www.jcbdd.com

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Little Theo Kennedy found his voice after working with the Early Intervention (EI) program through the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The Stratton boy worked with a speech therapist using play interaction, sign language and a word board until he could fully communicate on his own. For more information about EI's services, contact JCBDD at (740) 264-5812, Ext. 1130.

EI Program Helps Boy Find His Voice

Little Theo Kennedy is a bundle of energy, playing with his cat and excitedly showing off some of his toys.

Theo, the 2 ½-year-old son of Ashlea Kennedy of Stratton, is finally finding his voice after working with the Early Intervention (EI) program through the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The EI program is currently coordinating services for 77 children, with 66 on (IFSP's) individual family service plans who receive services in their home. About 15 employees, provide a variety of services including special instruction by developmental specialists, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy while the state has offered consultations for vision, audiology and mental health services.

Kennedy said the tyke did not speak when he was a year old and she wondered if it was something more serious. She described him as a very easygoing baby who generally made sounds but never vocalized words.

"I started to notice and compared him to other children his age," she recalled. "I didn't know if he was on track. Some said this was normal but others said it wasn't. I also was concerned about autism. I know some of the symptoms are being non-verbal or having limited speech, but he's so active and so social. I talked to his pediatrician and she suggested I take him to EI and have him evaluated."

Theo met with EI representatives who offered their services to help him thrive.

"Some of my feelings were vali-

dated," Kennedy added. "I said yes, I needed all the help I could get."

She and Theo would meet at home with speech therapist Jane Herron, who not only worked with Theo but also showed Kennedy and the boy's grandmother, Elizabeth Kennedy, strategies that helped him improve upon his communication, such as sign language. They also used a board which could be written or drawn upon as well as to hang magnetic pieces bearing pictures and word descriptions of foodstuffs, dinosaurs and even photos of family members for him to identify. Sessions were held weekly, then monthly, and Theo finally began to speak a year ago.

"His first sign was for 'more,'" she added. "The first time he said

(Continued as VOICE)

'Mama,' he was almost 2."

And to her, it was the sweetest sound.

"I was so excited that he'd talked. I thought he'd say more words and he just took off. He learned basic sign language so he could express his feelings," she said, noting that he has been speaking sentences for the past six months.

Herron recalled Theo being very receptive to learning and said the sessions were based on play interaction with a blend of sign language. Contrary to some beliefs, she said sign language does not stop a child from talking but helps them transition to speaking. Another plus is that Theo's mom and grandmother were able to work with him themselves.

"I think the program helped him and helped his mom. She and his grandma were really involved and got the word board," she said. "I think that really helped him because he never expressed his wants and needs, and soon he was able to express them on his own. When parents stay involved, you are more like a coach. The program is done through play and his mom watched and would do

what I did. He then progressed at a nice pace."

Herron continued that the EI program benefits parents as well as the children who are served.

"People don't realize it's not only working with the child; EI is there to help parents learn skills to help their child. When we work with the children, we're a model for the parents. It gives children a chance to have interventions before they go to school."

She has worked with children in schools and through JCBDD for the past 47 years and said it never ceases to amaze her when a child reaches goals.

"It's a great opportunity and it's just very rewarding," Herron said.

Theo is another shining example of a positive result. While Herron would normally work with a child until age 3, she ended his sessions a bit earlier because of his progress.

These days, the boy loves to look at books and is getting more used to verbalization. Theo will spend time with the word board, identify the magnetic pieces and say the words, plus he is speaking in sentences. It is

a clear indication of the strides he has made in the brief time he's worked with the program.

Kennedy admits she was hesitant to utilize EI, but she now realizes how vital it was to her son and how it could benefit other children.

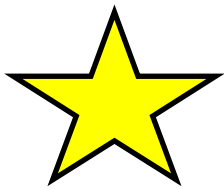
"It's crazy to think how far he's progressed. He started with Ms. Janie after his first birthday and within three months he was saying his first words. I really like [the EI program]. I love how convenient he was and enjoyed working with Jane and Service Coordinator Nick Saggio. It's wonderful. Theo loved to spend time with them and I wish more people would take advantage of it."

She smiles as Theo runs about and yells more words.

"It's really worked for him, and maybe it could work for other kids, too. He's doing really well and I feel like he's on par with his peers now," she said. "There's so much talking and I love it."

For more information about the program, contact the JCBDD at (740) 264-5812, Ext. 1130.

Getting to Know You...



Dianne Paice



Dianne Paice reached a milestone after serving the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities for the past 25 years.

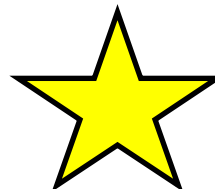
Paice, of East Springfield, marked the achievement in January and serves as the human resources coordinator. She graduated from Jefferson Technical College in 1984 with an associate's degree in applied business and accounting and obtained her SHRM-CP certification as a certified professional in human resources (HR) management.

She is active in her church as a liturgist, grades K-3 Sunday School teacher, choir member, Vacation Bible School volunteer and with related opportunities, plus she and her family organize an annual blood drive in honor of her late father, who succumbed to multiple myeloma in 2013.

"This is our way of paying it forward to help others who have a need in his honor," she said.

Her family includes her parents, siblings, spouse, children Kayla and Kyle and two grandchildren, Brianna and Alana, while three dogs, four chickens and a rooster round out the brood.

"Family is very important to me. I was lucky enough to have three of my grandparents live until they were in their 90's and one grandmother who lived to be 102. My mom is a huge inspiration to me and I hear all the time how I look just like her, but I hope that people see her on the inside as well."



Oliver Clark



Oliver Clark is an active boy who finds joy in the simplest things.

Clark, the son of Will and Alycia Clark of Steubenville, is an 8-year-old in the third grade at the School of Bright Promise.

His favorite hobby is shredding paper and among his favorite toys are kinetic sand and Cloud Foam Slime. He loves to play with anything he can shred, stretch or sprinkle.

Also known as Ollie, Clark was officially diagnosed with Level 3 non-verbal autism after turning 2 years old and was subsequently found to have Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). This has inspired his family to spread awareness and make sure he is able to experience everything in life that he possibly can.

Oliver loves to stay busy and plays on a Miracle League baseball team, attends weekly gymnastics classes and has been in swim lessons since he was a baby. He also LOVES to swim, and can hold his breath under water for longer than his mom is comfortable with.

If you see Ollie out and about, make sure to say hello! If you're lucky, you'll be greeted with his sweet smile and a high five!