

THE CENTER FOR AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Patient Testimonial, December 2017

“It’s been a long road but we are very lucky,”
says Heather, mom of twin boys Frankie and Jacob.

At three months old, Frankie and Jacob’s pediatrician had suggested they both begin physical therapy. Heather did not think much of it, as she was told this was typical for twins born prematurely. She did notice that they weren’t hitting the milestones she was always reading about but did not let it concern her.

By nine months old, several unique behaviors started to present themselves and the neurologist suggested Frankie begin occupational and physical therapy. Heather was told, best-case scenario, there was nothing wrong and he was simply receiving therapy. Worst-case scenario, there was a problem, but they were being proactive and starting treatment.

Then, there was Jacob, who Heather noticed never responded when called by his name. In fact, he did not respond to anything. Jacob did a hearing test, but his hearing was just fine.

After 15 months of not speaking, Jacob went in for a speech evaluation and the doctor suggested both boys begin speech therapy.

“This is so much therapy,” thought Heather. “I was so

overwhelmed. All of the books recommended to me at the time kept using the word “autism.” I had not heard that before and I was confused – it felt like everyone knew what was going on but nobody was discussing it with me.”

At 20 months, Frankie and Jacob were part of a clinical trial to determine the susceptibility of children who have not quite reached a diagnosable age. They identified Jacob as high-risk and Frankie as moderate-risk for autism.



The boys’ neurologist suggested Heather call The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders immediately. Thus began an imperative and extremely beneficial relationship for their family.

“When we first got to The Center, it was amazing,” remembers Heather. “I was so used to having to restrain my child at

doctors appointments but we walked inside, and there was a play train available and personable staff, which made all the difference.”

When talking with a physician at The Center, Heather felt heard and comforted. He told her he would follow Jacob closely but at such a young age, it was hard to give a formal diagnosis. Kids often catch up on their delays. At that time, Frankie was less of a concern.



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In 2015, the physician at The Center spent more time with Jacob and told Heather that her son had autism. He suggested Jacob get extremely involved with The Center's programs and therapy to start addressing his developmental challenges.

It took a while for Jacob to turn the corner. Heather sat with him in speech classes at The Center, often times feeling hopeless. Will my son ever speak? Will he rely on a device to communicate with his peers and me? Those were the questions that ran through her head.

"Then I remember them telling me, 'There is going to be a day where you are not going to be able to get him to stop talking.' Now I can honestly say that I do have that problem and he will not stop talking. That is a true testimony to The Center and the work they do," said Heather.

Heather also started to notice alerting behaviors in Frankie. She decided to bring him to The Center for an evaluation as well and heard a very similar diagnosis: autism.

Heather remembers driving home after Jacob's initial diagnosis, questioning the future of her son, "Will he go to prom? Will he get married? Surely, his brother Frankie will look after him." Then after Frankie's diagnosis, "How can this be?" "Who is going to take care of both of them later in life? What happens now?" She began panicking but decided she was no longer going to be a backseat driver of autism parenting.

Heather praises the programs at The Center, as they helped her work out her biggest frustrations in just one week. Initially, Frankie and Jacob were spending 25 hours each, per week in at-home therapy. Now, they spend 15 hours each, per week at The Center, and are showing significant signs of improvement.

"The Center has been a life-saving resource for me," said Heather "I know that if I have a question, there are many

experienced individuals who can answer me. Anything that I could ever possibly need is available at The Center."

The boys are now four and a half and each have their own unique personalities and passions. Frankie loves music and cars and Jacob enjoys photography and art.

On Heather's advice to parents who have just received a diagnosis, "The best thing you can do is get in contact with The Center. They have everything for you, from workshops to support groups and they connect you with people who really understand what you go through on a day-to-day basis."



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