

You've probably heard the phrase, "Everyone has a story..." That's especially true when considering the people who are served by the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities (LCBDD). It seems everyone has interesting and inspiring stories to share about facing and overcoming significant challenges each and every day.

At the LCBDD, we celebrate small gains and cheer on major accomplishments. Most importantly, we do whatever it takes to help people with developmental disabilities meet their personal goals and achieve their dreams. We do this because we see the possibilities in people with disabilities. We understand that all people have potential and are worthy of living productive, full lives.

Last year, the LCBDD served more than 1,300 children, adults and their families -- 41 of whom currently live in the Johnstown area. In fact, there are more than 250 individuals who are served in western Licking County alone. They are babies, toddlers, school-age children and adults. They may be your neighbors, fellow parishioners, classmates, coworkers, employees, or members of your family. No matter how they touch your lives, we hope you will picture the potential in each and every one.

"Johnstown Snapshots" is the first of several publications highlighting the stories of individuals served in communities throughout Licking County.

Our mission: The Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities helps people with developmental disabilities to discover, pursue and achieve what is important to them.

By building a community of caring people, we can all see the possibilities in people with disabilities



www.LCountyDD.org

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Personal stories of individuals who live in your community.



Johnstown Snapshots
LUCY HELLER, AGE 16 MONTHS

(800) 325-2848
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Lucy's story

All parents have great hopes and expectations for their babies. They often wonder what kind of person their child will grow to be. That couldn't be more true for Teri and Ed Heller of Monroe Township, near Johnstown.

Their daughter Lucia -- better known as "Lucy" -- was born August 4, 2009. At four months, Lucy was diagnosed with a rare and significant vision impairment. Shortly thereafter, she experienced the first of many medical problems that have contributed to developmental delays.

Lucy has a severe form of epilepsy, which causes seizures. She also was diagnosed with craniostenosis, a condition in which the sutures of her skull closed prematurely. She also has brain abnormalities including cerebral palsy. Lucy has an irreparable "short palate," Teri says, which makes it difficult for her to swallow thin liquids. She also has a structural defect in her heart, and has experienced kidney stones brought on by side effects from seizure medication.

Teri is proud to say that her daughter has been seizure-free for more than six months. But in all, Lucy has been hospitalized a total of five times since birth. Her most recent stay at Nationwide Children's Hospital was in late September when she had a feeding tube inserted into her stomach, and a repair was made to her lower esophagus to correct a reflux disorder. It turned out to be a life-threatening ordeal. When doctors were performing the surgery, they found that little Lucy had a bowel malformation.

"Her intestines were not in the place where God had intended them to be," explains Teri. "The doctors had to make a decision during the laparoscopy to open her up and fix it."

Following the successful surgery, Lucy developed a serious infection which kept her hospitalized for 15 days. But she has since recuperated and is getting the nutrition she needs from the feeding tube. Lucy and her family -- including older brothers Koty, Conner and Ethan -- now are gearing up for new challenges.

"Now that she's feeling better, it's time to focus on Lucy's development and getting her going," Teri says.

Lucy participates in the Early Intervention programs offered by the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities (LCBDD). She and her mom receive weekly home visits from Caley Norton, an LCBDD physical therapist. Lucy also sees an occupational therapist at Children's Hospital, and has her lower right leg "serial casted" once a week. Serial casting is a common procedure performed on babies and children with cerebral palsy. It is a non-invasive technique in which a cast is placed on Lucy's leg to gradually increase the range of motion in her affected joints. Lucy also uses a "corner chair," obtained from the LCBDD.



"The corner chair helps strengthen Lucy's back and, more importantly, it gives her the stability she needs to focus on using her hands," Caley explains. "It allows her to move freely and interact with her toys. This is an area where she is showing growth in development."

Lucy's chair is equipped with a light string and switch that she can operate with a simple hand movement.

"Her mom or a family member can direct Lucy to turn the lights on. This exercise teaches her how to manipulate her environment," Caley adds. "She's learning how to turn things on and off, which is the concept of 'cause and effect.' By doing this, she is able to better control her surroundings and gain independence."

When the serial casting is completed, Caley says she will start working with Lucy to use an adaptive frame for standing, and then a walker. The Heller family plans to keep in contact with the Ohio State School for the Blind. Dr. Kay Clarke, the school's well-respected infant outreach specialist, already has consulted with Lucy in the home. Soon Lucy may attend music therapy, and participate in occasional speech consultations with the LCBDD, Teri says.

Even though the Hellers have seen many emotional and financial challenges in the last year, the experience has brought out the best in each of them.

"We've had to make a lot of sacrifices, but they've been so great," Teri says of her husband and sons. "Ed and I are so proud of the boys and, of course, Lucy. I just have to keep in mind that, despite our challenges, things could be much, much worse. We are very thankful that they are not. We just take it one day at a time and never take anything for granted. We are reminded that every day is a gift."

Lucy's parents are very excited for their little girl to reach her potential. No one should doubt the Hellers' resolve.

"We are very determined," Teri emphatically states. "I'm not going to say it's going to be easy. We just want to give Lucy the best and most typical life she can have. Her little body has been through a lot and she's a little fighter. She's an amazing little girl. We just can't wait to see what she can do."