

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. It seems everyone has interesting and inspiring stories to share about facing and overcoming significant challenges each and every day. 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.

More than 150 adults and children who live in Pataskala are served by the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities. In fact, the fastest growing segment of our service population is infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) who live in the Pataskala area. There are nearly 260 individuals who are served in western Licking County alone. Overall, the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities serves more than 1,400 children and adults, and their families. They may be your friends, neighbors, fellow parishoners, 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.

"Pataskala Snapshots" is part of a series of publications highlighting the stories of people and families who are 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



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For more information about Down syndrome, please visit the National Down Syndrome Society's website -- www.NDSS.org.

Personal stories of people and families who live in your community.



Pataskala Snapshots
KAIDEN COLE, age 2 1/2

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Families – they are at the heart of our agency. Not only does the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities nurture individuals, but also their immediate support system – their families and loved ones. In this edition of “Snapshots,” we provide a glimpse into the life of one Pataskala family that is receiving the support they need during what some might consider challenging times. In doing so, they are preparing for a bright future for their family’s youngest member.

Kaiden’s story

In February 2009, Joni and Zech Cole experienced a whirlwind of emotions. Their second son, Kaiden, was born four weeks premature and with Down syndrome, the most commonly-occurring chromosomal disorder that affects intellectual and social development. The Coles already were the proud parents of a typical, healthy two-year-old boy named Landon. But when Kaiden arrived, they had a host of questions running through their minds. Like many parents facing similar situations, they just were not prepared to learn of their son’s disability, Joni admits. She acknowledges they have a tremendous support network of family and friends, but she and Zech still were afraid.

“We were really upset and shocked,” reflects Joni. “We kept asking ourselves, ‘What did we do wrong?’ We didn’t know anything about Down syndrome, so we didn’t know what to do.”

Not long after his birth, doctors detected Kaiden had a heart defect that is often associated with Down syndrome. He spent the first four weeks of his life in the neonatal intensive care unit at Grant Medical Center in Columbus. His heart was later repaired through surgery at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. At that time, Kaiden was just eight months old. Other medical treatments followed, including procedures and surgery to correct a clubbed foot. And then Kaiden spent his first birthday in the hospital battling a serious respiratory virus.

But medical setbacks didn’t keep Kaiden and his family from working with developmental specialists and therapists from the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities’ Early Intervention Services. They first reached out to the Coles by visiting their Pataskala home when Kaiden was less than three months old. The family also began regular consultations with an Early Intervention service coordinator who helps them gain access to services appropriate to their needs and Kaiden’s abilities. The Board of Developmental Disabilities staff assured the Coles that they were not alone and everything would be all right.

“We were very relieved,” Joni says. “They gave us some direction. They came to our home



to set goals. At first, the goal was to work with Kaiden on sitting up.”

Early Intervention specialists have visited the Coles every few weeks since then to set new goals each time Kaiden reaches developmental milestones.

“They are very good at identifying what is holding him back, and helping us to correct that,” Joni explains, noting the home-based therapy sessions have allowed the entire family – including big brother Landon – to get involved. The experience has given Kaiden more opportunities to learn in his natural environment.

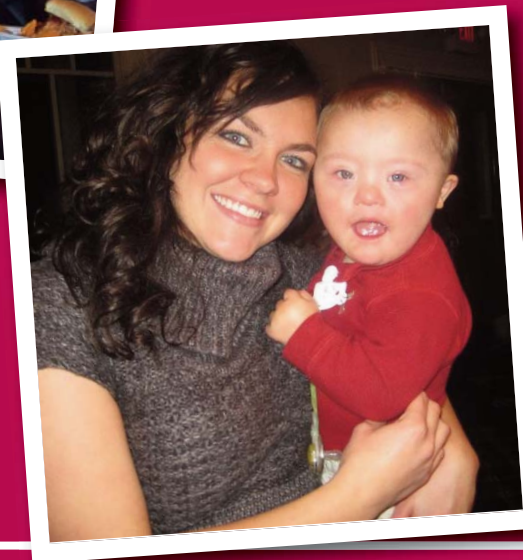


Kaiden has made great strides in meeting developmental milestones only slightly behind other typical children who are his age. One major goal was hurdled this past summer – Kaiden learned to walk at age two. Future goals include talking, coloring and potty training – all in anticipation of going to preschool next year. His parents also are considering enrolling him in a music-therapy program. Kaiden loves music, his mom says, which is likely to further motivate him to reach important developmental milestones in the future.



The help they’ve received from the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities during the last couple of years has made an immeasurable difference, Joni says. They are much more relaxed about Kaiden’s future, which allows them to focus on their family, rather than Kaiden’s disability. It has also inspired them to

help others. Along with friends and their extended family, they’ve raised money for Down syndrome causes and for other families who are served by the Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities. They hosted a golf outing this past summer and formed a 60-member team to participate in the National Down Syndrome Society’s “Buddy Walk,” held annually in Columbus. Despite their initial apprehension, the Coles recognize that Kaiden’s disability has been a blessing in disguise.



“Because Kaiden has Down syndrome, it has opened our eyes to an entirely different community of people,” Joni says of other families with similar challenges. “Everyone has been so supportive.”