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Summer 2023

Maddox Flourished Beyond Boundaries

At home with his family, three-year-old Maddox was in his element. He was energetic, interactive, and engaging. His smile lit up the room. But after spending most of his young life isolated due to the pandemic, he was shy and uncomfortable in social situations. Maddox's family knew it was important for him to be with children his age in a safe environment that understood his unique abilities as a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

So they turned to his regional case manager who recommended We Care's Beyond Boundaries program for toddlers with autism or who are at risk for autism. At first, Maddox's family was hesitant due to the distance. But after a tour of the classroom and meeting several staff members, they decided it seemed like the perfect opportunity to increase Maddox's socialization and structure.

Maddox immediately felt a connection with his teachers Masako and Maria.

When Maddox's mom would take him to the classroom and he turned to wave goodbye with a smile on his face, her heart would fill with happiness. The same little boy who used to carefully back away when children would approach him at a park was now joyfully interacting with other toddlers.

And on Fridays when they would spend time on the playground with We Care's preschoolers, Masako would report back that Maddox was "running right up to the big kids to say hi!"

A photo really is worth a thousand words.

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the We Care Community:

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A message from:

Pete Caldwell, Executive Director



Dear We Care Family,

I hope you and your family are well and enjoying the beautiful summer.

At We Care, our work continues year-round. And this time in particular includes a great deal of thoughtful planning and program development to ensure we're meeting the evolving needs of our community and the children and families we serve. We'll have more to say about that in the coming months, but there are post-pandemic opportunities – new funding, new promising practices – that are drawing our attention and creating a lot of excitement for us.

You'll read in these pages about a very special evening with the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation that highlighted our work, and provided a wonderful chance to share our story with hundreds of community-minded neighbors and potential supporters.

You'll also see a story about an incredible young boy who recently graduated from our Beyond Boundaries program, as well as ways in our Advocacy Corner to turn your interest in early childhood intervention services into action!

Everything we've done and do comes from the support and partnership of those who give so much of their time, talent, and philanthropy. We Care continues its programs because of you and we are always grateful.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this newsletter. Please let me know if I can answer any questions about We Care, our plans, or our evolving efforts to partner with families to change the lives of children who can benefit from it most.

Sincerely,

Pete



Maddox Flourished Beyond Boundaries (continued from page 1)

Maria and Masako would not only share daily photos of Maddox learning and playing, they would also provide insightful updates on his transitioning moods and needs. This empathetic touch reassured his family that Maddox was in an environment that met his needs in the way that worked best for him.

Maddox flourished during his time with We Care.

Now able to actively voice his wants, his communication has drastically improved. His family can interact with him on a deeper level and be more responsive as a result of his increased ability to express himself. They especially love the clean-up routine that carried over from the classroom and into the home!

Maddox also became a leader. His innate empathy enabled him to tune into the needs of other children, and he would be the first to run and help another child who he noticed was struggling.



The socialization and positive reinforcement he received at We Care have allowed Maddox's independent and humorous personality to shine through. His athleticism and love of adventure were nurtured, and his family often finds him scootering around, kicking a soccer ball, or swinging his small golf clubs like a pro.

Maddox has now graduated from Beyond Boundaries, and while Maria, Masako, his classmates and everybody at We Care will greatly miss him, we are exceptionally proud of the progress he's made and the incredible person he is. His family is thrilled that his early start with We Care put him on the right path toward being his most authentic self, and they are overjoyed to see all the exciting opportunities that await him in his bright future.

“When I first met Maddox, I was surprised at how fast he learned. We would teach him a new skill once or twice, and days later he would be doing the new skill independently. He had an amazing family circle that was always open to listening and asking questions about his development in the classroom. It was a pleasure working with Maddox and his family.”

— Maria, We Care's Beyond Boundaries Classroom Teacher

The Lesher Foundation Supports We Care and the Community

We Care was extremely honored to participate in the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation's Newsmaker Speaker Series recently. A dedicated supporter of the services we provide to at-risk young children, the Lesher Foundation welcomed members of We Care's Board of Directors, staff, and community of supporters to a wonderful reception, followed by the main speaker event where a video highlighted our work in the community. This was paired with an inspirational presentation by Sarah Thomas, the NFL's first female official and one of Sports Illustrated's "100 Most Influential NFL Figures of All Time."

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The Lesher Foundation Supports We Care and the Community (continued from page 3)

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Hosted by Devorah Levine, the Lesher Foundation's Executive Director, and moderated by KTVU's Frank Mallicoat, the event allowed us the incredible opportunity to increase awareness about the importance of early intervention and the services We Care offers.

We are immensely grateful to have been invited to be part of such an important gathering, and for the very generous support of the Lesher Foundation, Sarah Thomas, and KTVU.

Advocacy Corner

“The difference between adaptive and maladaptive reactions is all about the when.”

—Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, Founder of Center for Youth Wellness and former Surgeon General of California

We Care's primary focus is to provide life-changing resources to at-risk children and their families. Each program is deeply connected to the science of early intervention and has – in most cases – decades of outcomes to show us their value and efficacy.

The science is clear.

To maximize each young brain's capacity to adapt and rewire itself when needed, intervention must happen as early as possible, regardless of the nature of the services. Since 1960, We Care has impacted the community immensely by innovating, honing, and expanding services that have changed the developmental arcs and outcomes of thousands of children in Contra Costa County.

You too can make a difference!



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health The foundation of all future development

Everyone who touches the life of a child can promote social and emotional well-being
Social and emotional development, or **infant and early childhood mental health**, is the developing capacity of a child from birth to 5 years old to...



...all in the context of family, community, and culture.



We can all work together to ensure that more babies, children, and families have access to programs like those We Care offers. From promotion to prevention to treatment, raising your voice in support will aid in helping some of the most vulnerable children in our community to avoid lifelong mental health challenges.

Thinkbabies.org has prepared easy-to-use advocacy tools and resources that you can deploy today to begin laying the groundwork for future development.

Visit thinkbabies.org/policy-priorities-infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health/ to learn more about infant and early childhood mental health, the importance of increasing awareness, and to access templates that can be used to tweet, or to email Congress to #ThinkBabiesAndAct.

Please take a stand and demonstrate your commitment to supporting healthy development right from the start.

Providing safety-net services for at-risk children and their families in our community for over six decades.