

Our daughter, Kara Stevens, has changed before our very eyes and we believe whole heartedly that her therapists and teachers at UCP play a direct role in her progress. Kara has been diagnosed with both Autism and Hypertonia. Kara has been attending UCP since September of 2009.

During her time at UCP, Kara has gone from being completely non-verbal to having a vocabulary of more than 75 words. Her speech therapist has helped Kara at her own pace. It took some time in the beginning, but with determination and patience Kara even loves to imitate animal sounds. Kara is able to express when she wants something or even when she is unhappy. Sadly, before UCP as parents we had to guess to what she was wanting and thinking. Kara was completely withdrawn and hated change.

With her physical therapist, Kara has finally learned to walk up and down the stairs unassisted. Although she obviously would rather walk up or down a ramp, Kara can do it. Kara has become so much stronger in her legs. We try to keep Kara active and her favorite pastime is swimming. She loves Adventure Island and even loves the big water slides with her daddy!

I believe that with the Occupational Therapy Kara has made the most significant progress. Therapists, Doctors and specialists really don't like the word "sensory" but to Kara improving her adaption with sensory has been the "game changer". As her parents, we believe that Kara has been able to learn how to separate all the garble that goes on in a typical day. She loves to be hugged, cuddled and in most cases "thrown" around during horseplay. Kara can handle, during short time periods, the mall, running errands, new places and sometimes loud sounds. Kara can now brush her own teeth and in fact loves to brush her teeth just for the pure enjoyment of the sensory effect she gets. Before Kara was at UCP, she would not hold our hand in the parking lot nor would she just walk. She would always insist on being carried. The transition from just the car to school took months for her to figure out. Now she even says "Walk", meaning put me down! She loves to hold our hands and in fact will initiate grabbing our hands to take us to what she wants or show us something she sees. And now, at a little over 3 years old, Kara is using the potty regularly!

All of Kara's teachers and administrators at UCP have been incredible. They have not just taught and cared for our daughter, but they have become a support system for us. As parents of an Autistic child it is easy to feel lost not knowing what the right thing is to do. But in time, they have helped us look forward to our future together as a family. Kara has contributed so much to our lives and has brought meaning in ways that are unexplainable to us and our families as well as the community at UCP. Kara has a spirit about her which if encouraged and matured will one day help her to inspire others. UCP has definitely helped bring out Kara's natural character and maybe for the first time introduced us to our wonderful, loving and perfect child.

Thanks for all your help and dedication with helping foster children with needs.

Kirk and Sarah Stevens