

TKOC Families Share Experiences
By Jill Hamblen

The path of our autism journey has been filled with numerous twists and turns. It has been a smooth ride as well as a rocky one. But through it all, Cincinnati Children's Hospital has accompanied us on our path.

We received Henry's autism diagnosis in June of 2011. He was 2 1/2 at the time. We were so new to everything and all the terms and clinical jargon sounded like a foreign language to us. I did not know much about ASD, but the little I did know presented us with what looked like a very bleak future. That is where CCHMC came into our lives. There are so many options for therapies and programs for children with ASD. They did a fantastic job of helping us navigate what was out there.



We decided the EIBI (Early Intensive Behavior Intervention) Program at CCHMC was the best fit for our Henry. That is where his true path on this journey of autism began. The program is directed by Dr. Kimberly Kroeger-Geoppinger, but I refer to her as “our guardian angel”. Henry had a tough time transitioning into the program. The intensive structure and programming was hard for him, but it was what he desperately needed. As the weeks and months went on, his path shifted direction. He started to get the hang of things, and I saw him begin to blossom into a bright, sweet and funny little boy who wanted to learn and be a part of the classroom environment. While in the program for three years, Henry also took advantage of the potty training program and the intensive feeding clinic. He is now fully potty trained and eats a wide variety of foods. There is no “one size fits all” program for children with ASD. We found CCHMC to be such a blessing because they do such a fantastic job of tailoring the programs to fit each child's specific needs. Autism can be fickle, and to have therapies that evolve as the child does is a must.

We have just completed the three year EIBI program and Henry is gearing up for kindergarten. It is bittersweet for us. Bitter because we will say goodbye to the amazing staff that have been with us since the start of our journey, and sweet because that amazing staff gave Henry the tools he needs to have a happy, bright and successful future.

We continue to come to CCHMC for speech and occupational therapy, and Henry sees a developmental pediatrician once a year as well. I take comfort in knowing that we have one of the best hospitals in the country in our own backyard. Being a part of CCHMC has truly changed the trajectory of Henry's life and his outcome. I no longer view ASD as a bleak future. Instead our future will take a path that will certainly have twists and turns, but will be one full of promise, success, and happiness!