

NEWS FROM YOUR ELKS MAJOR PROJECT . . .

Child's communication skills improve through therapy:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the wonderful program your organization provides. My daughter, Tiffani, is currently receiving weekly speech therapy and it has made such a difference in her life as well as ours.

When Tiffani first started talking she was over 18 months old. She had perfect hearing and was healthy overall so we just assumed she would talk when she was ready. At first we were thrilled just to hear her babble but as she got older her speech did not improve. Although we could pick out one or two clear words here and there, most of our conversations with Tiffani were a guessing game. She would talk, we would guess what she was trying to tell us and then she would nod when we got it right. I am a stay at home mom who spent every day with this wonderful little girl and I could only understand about 20% of what she was saying. It was heartbreaking. When she tried to say something to strangers they would laugh or look at me for a translation. I wasn't sure if this was normal so I started to look for some type of evaluation. We found out about her speech difficulties at a Preschool Assessment run by the State of Hawaii. Unfortunately Tiffani was three and the Department of Education would not be able to provide any speech therapy until she entered kindergarten. I felt we couldn't wait that long. Tiffani was already starting to withdraw from communicating with us. I can only imagine how frustrating it must have been for her. We could get her speech therapy through a private provider but it would cost \$250 just for them to evaluate her plus the actual cost of the therapy. Our medical provider told us that they do not cover speech therapy unless a person has the ability to speak and then loses it. We would have to shoulder the cost all on our own. My husband was the only one working out of the home. I stayed at home with our three youngest children so financially we could not afford the therapy Tiffani needed, no matter how badly we wanted her to have it. It was a very sad time for my husband and me. Then we heard about the Elks having a speech therapy program for 3-5 year olds. We were told that we would have to go on a wait list but the therapy was free through the sponsorship of the California-Hawaii Elks. We waited for a couple of months and then Hedley Uetake [Speech-Language Pathologist] who told us there was an opening for Tiffani contacted us. Tiffani now receives weekly speech therapy from Miss Hedley and it has changed her life and ours. Her speech has improved enough that she can hold a conversation with me. She can tell me how her day at school was. She can make her own choices known to others and she doesn't have to follow just because other kids couldn't understand her. I wish there were words to express how it felt to hear her say for the first time, "I wuv you mommy." After 6 months of therapy her "wuv" is now "love" and her speech continues to improve every day.

I have to thank Hedley Uetake who works so diligently with my daughter. It isn't easy keeping a three year old focused, but she does it week after week. Miss Hedley makes games up and does crafts so the therapy is never boring or tedious for Tiffani. She is always smiling and pleasant and she makes the therapy feel fun. Tiffani doesn't even realize she is working on her speech and yet she is ... a lot.

I hope your organization continues to provide this much needed program for children who would otherwise not be able to receive treatment. I want you to know that you have touched our lives infinitely and for that, I am forever grateful.



A coin a day so they can walk, talk, see and play!