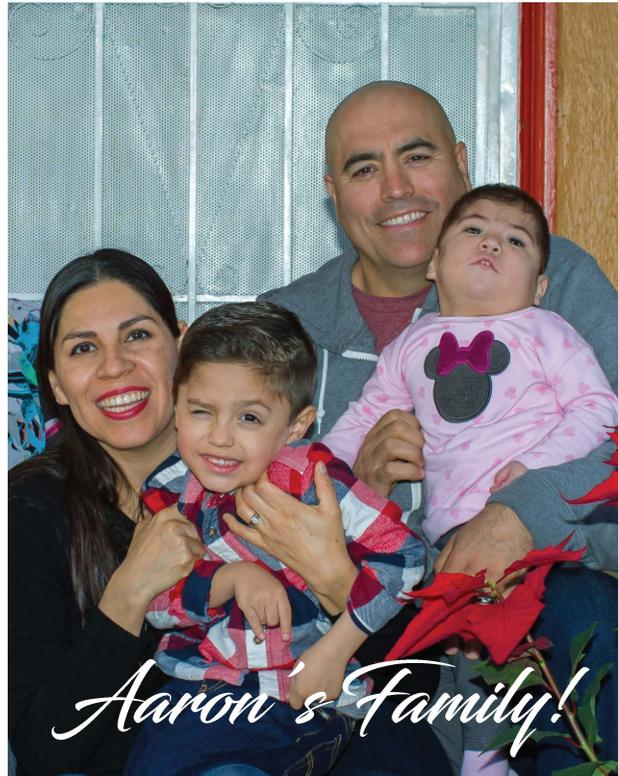


2020 Theme Child



This family has faced a number of challenges over the past few years, but they are strong and determined to raise happy, functional and independent children. The donations from the Elks have provided Aaron and Sarah the therapy needed to help them reach this goal. A huge "Thank You" to all ELKS from Hawaii and California for your enthusiastic and selfless fundraising efforts and donations! You are not just helping children with disabilities and their families, but making the world a better place for all of us.



We are so grateful for the speech therapy services for our son Aaron. It gives us such peace of mind to know that our wonderful Elks speech therapist, Toby, will be in our home every week providing Aaron such important therapy. He has made wonderful progress and this is all due to the generosity of the Elks members. On behalf of all of the thousands of children who are being served through these selfless donations, we want to say thank you to all the Elk members throughout California and Hawaii.



California-Hawaii
Elks Major Project, Inc.
5450 E. Lamona Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727

PH: 559-255-4531
FAX: 559-456-2659
www.chea-elks.org
chea@chea-elks.org



Aaron is an adorable 5-year-old boy. He is energetic, funny, affectionate and rambunctious. So basically, Aaron is a lot like many 5-year-old boys keeping their parents on the run. What is not so typical is that Aaron is not yet using many words to make his wants and needs known.



The most intensive period of speech and language development is during the first three years of life, a period of rapid brain development. At about 12-months-old, many children are already using single words, and by age 2 may be putting words together in simple sentences.

Aaron's parents noticed early on that Aaron was not using simple words or pointing to direct their attention. Aaron was also a bit delayed in walking so he was receiving physical therapy in his home through The California-Hawaii Elks Major Project. Aaron's physical therapist, Megan Macleod, suggested that Aaron receive a speech/language evaluation and referred Aaron's parents to Toby Tamayo-Davis, speech therapist with the California-Hawaii Elks Major Project.

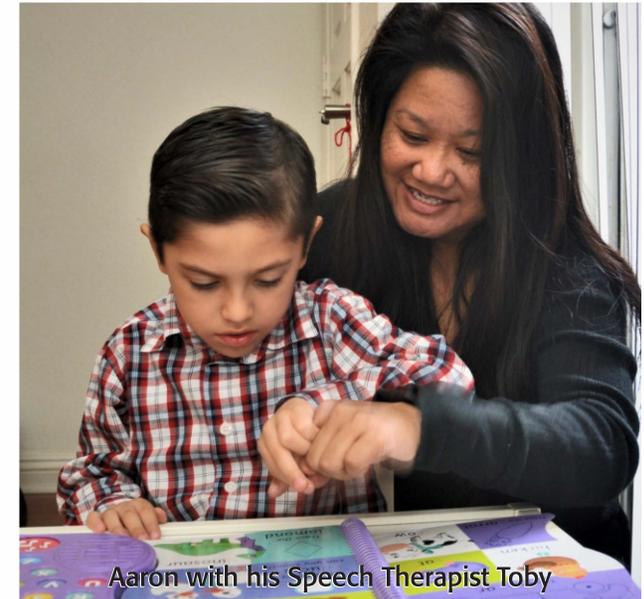
Toby evaluated Aaron when he was approximately 18-months-old and determined that he would benefit from individual speech therapy. She immediately began working with Aaron and his parents weekly in his home. Speech therapy sessions included using pictures, books, songs, toys and lots of repetition. Aaron was making slow but steady gains due to speech therapy, but Aaron's parents felt that there was something more than just a straight forward language delay, and had Aaron undergo further diagnostic testing.

At the age of 2 years, 9 months, Aaron was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which is a developmental disability that often includes challenges with communication. The term "spectrum" refers to the wide range of symptoms and skills that children with ASD may have.

Toby was the perfect therapist for Aaron due to her extensive experience as a speech therapist working with children with ASD. She educated and empowered Aaron's parents with a home program so that they could be involved in Aaron's speech therapy all week long, not only when Toby was there for his therapy session. Aaron's parents were outstanding with following through with all home program suggestions made by Toby, and eventually began seeing improvement in Aaron's ability to communicate both verbally and non-verbally, in his play skills and his ability to follow a routine. It was a lot of work, but certainly a labor of love. But the generosity of the ELKS was about to get even more significant for this family.

Aaron's mother, Gabby had a baby girl, Sarah, in December 2016. A baby sister for Aaron! During the pregnancy Sarah was diagnosed with non-immune hydrops. This is a very rare but serious condition and Sarah was transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) immediately after birth.

Sarah would spend the next 8 months in the NICU due to issues of chronic lung disease, heart problems and needed a feeding tube. While Aaron required a lot of attention due to his diagnosis and therapy needs, the family now had two children with special needs.



Aaron with his Speech Therapist Toby

Aaron's mother or father were in the NICU with Sarah every day spending hours by her side. If ever a family needed a skilled speech therapist coming to them in their home for Aaron, it was this family.

When Sarah was discharged from the NICU, it was clear that she would require physical therapy to gain strength and mobility, but she was much too medically fragile to be out of the home for therapy. Aaron's physical therapist through the Major Project, Megan Macleod, was right there to step in and begin weekly physical therapy for Sarah.

It was a chaotic time for the family due to the multiple medical appointments for both children. They were being pulled in a million different directions, but the one constant was both children getting the very important therapy services they needed weekly in their home, all due to the generosity of the Elks. Sarah is now crawling and there is no stopping her!

Aaron still has a way to go, but is using several words and making his needs known. Aaron loves to sing, use gestures to songs, plays on his iPad and loves his little sister.