

Jackson's Story

My own son, Jackson was born March 4, 1997, a beautiful, healthy baby boy. He was walking and talking right on schedule. It wasn't until between 18 and 24 months that things began to change. We were slowly, but surely losing our baby into the lonely, bizarre world of Autism. He still had very useful skills, so his diagnosis was extremely delayed. He was finally diagnosed officially with Autism at the age of 5.

We immediately began fighting as hard as we could to combat this horrible disorder. After some research, we realized that a Gluten-free/Casein-free diet was worth trying. We began seeing all of the reactions that everyone had warned us of: dark circles around his eyes, more severe and frequent tantrums, decreased appetite, etc. However, those reactions subsided after about 2 weeks. We didn't really see a whole lot of difference with the diet until he had unavoidable infractions. Then, we would immediately see "drunken" behavior. He would truly look like he was "high" on something. After several trials of stopping and restarting the diet, we continue the diet today indefinitely. We visited a very well-qualified DAN! physician and did extensive testing. We began many, many supplements (in pill form, various creams, and Methyl B-12 shots) as well as chelation therapy, which we continue today. Through urine testing, we are seeing a lot of metals coming out. With the massive supplementation, his body should get to the point where it expels these heavy metals on its own. Until then, we will continue to chelate. Jackson has also undergone BioSET Therapy, which is an allergy elimination treatment. We believe this is the reason Jackson can now tolerate many foods that once seemed to be troublesome for him.

One month after his diagnosis, we began a Verbal Behavior home program. He received this one-on-one therapy for about 30 hours a week in the beginning, and faded to about 12-15 hours a week and now uses it as tutoring with pre and post teaching. Jackson's success with this program has been phenomenal. It has allowed him to be able to function in a regular classroom with minimal support, and has allowed him to function more within our family. Up until his 4th grade year, Jackson was part of a Verbal Behavior Program in a public school that offers inclusion. He was in a regular classroom about 95% of the day, with an assistant as needed. However, he no longer needs that program today. He is doing beautifully!

At about age 8 ½ we began hyperbaric oxygen therapy. This therapy was particularly important for Jackson as it helped him to "turn the social corner". Before hyperbaric therapy, Jackson had much difficulty with social appropriateness. So, it was very hard for him to make and keep friends. Jackson now has a typical best friend, a typical girlfriend, as well as many other friends at school. He also plays with his brother and sister at home. While he still has a few "kinks" to work out, we are very confident that he has every opportunity available to him in the future...college, marriage, etc.

We have also had our share of Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy. However, he no longer needs either. We are very proud of him. We will continue down this road to recovery with a vengeance. One day we *will* have our son COMPLETELY back. We will not let Autism defeat us!

As the mother of a recovering child with autism attempting to assist other parents in their battles, I understand that there are many families who cannot afford the treatments that their children need and deserve. These treatments can cost \$60,000 annually. It breaks my heart that so many with autism cannot afford these necessary treatments, and that is why I have formed VIA.