

## Testimonial

In 2001, our 15 month-old son, Ethan, was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. He had lost all ability to communicate, had delayed fine motor skills, sensory issues, cried constantly and was unable to leave the house or go to another location. In fact, anyone outside of our immediate family who entered the house increased Ethan's agitation. We launched the recommended "traditional" therapies for autism recommended by Asheville's local experts. This proved to be a waste of our time and money. Ethan hated it and would barely cooperate.

In 2003, when Ethan turned three, we cautiously began an Applied Behavior Analysis program with 4 specially-trained ABA tutors working a total of 20 hours a week. As my husband always explains to people, within one week Ethan went from a spectator in our home to a participant. There are no words to describe the joy and HOPE this gave us. We quickly jumped to 40 hours a week and saw our son continue to flourish over the next two and a half years. The little boy who had cried constantly and refused to use his hands began to laugh more, speak clearly and wrap those hands around mine with big hugs attached. Bit by bit, his language delays, fine and gross motor delays and odd behaviors diminished with each hour of therapy. ABA gave us our son back.

In 2008, we are proud to say, Ethan finished his ABA program. He is a bright, loving and enthusiastic third-grader. People who meet him would never know how tough life was in the beginning. He attends school on his own, is on par with his peers in most areas, is academically gifted, and can be found at recess playing football with friends. He is also an affectionate and kind brother to not only his big brother but also his baby sister. We shudder when we think of how we almost did not "do" ABA. Once all his "junk" behaviors were eliminated, his mind was free to learn and grow appropriately. He still has a few challenges, such as with abstract thinking, but enjoys learning and works happily with an in-school tutor to improve this skill. I could go on and on about how great he is!

My hope for our community is a classroom for children like my son. It pains me when people look at Ethan and want the same for their child, only they have not the resources. For some, autism does not have to be a life sentence. If caught early and treated appropriately – more success stories like Ethan's can exist. It is my hope you can help make this happen.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Hill