

# Learning to Communicate

**Agency:** USD Scottish Rite Children's Clinic for Speech & Language Therapy

**Service:** Provides evaluation, treatment, counseling, and education for children with communication disorders and their families.

**Need:** Research indicates that 10% of the population suffers from a communication disorder. Approximately 7.5 million people in the United States have trouble using their voices. 8 to 9% of young children have a speech disorder. By the first grade, roughly 5 percent of children have noticeable speech disorders; the majority of these speech disorders have no known cause.

**Impact:** Over 740 children were provided speech and language services in 2008. These youth are helped in the following areas:

- speech articulation
- language (receptive and expressive)
- fluency (stuttering)
- voice
- oral motor/feeding
- pure tone hearing screenings
- impedance screenings

Children with speech and language difficulties are often frustrated by their inability to communicate at a level equal to their peers. USD Scottish Rite helps them to better communicate.

Having a baby is supposed to be a happy, joyous time. Expectant moms think about and prepare for the moment when their baby arrives, but rarely consider hearing anything more than "It's a boy" or "It's a girl."

"When Koby was born, the doctor told us right away that he has cleft lip and palate," says Bridget. "I honestly wasn't quite sure what it even was."

Cleft lip is formed in the top of the lip as either a small gap or an indentation in the lip and/or nose. Cleft palate is a condition in which the two plates of the roof of the mouth are not completely joined. Cleft palate is the 4<sup>th</sup> most common birth defect in America, affecting 1 out of every 700 births. Surgery can be used to help close the gaps.

"Koby's first surgery happened as soon as he was 10 lbs," adds Jamie, Koby's father. "He went on to have four surgeries total by age 6."

Right after his second surgery, Koby started speech therapy with Birth to 3. Children born with cleft palate have to learn how to make sounds correctly. They often start making incorrect sounds because their lips hurt when trying to form the correct shape.

"After he graduated from Birth to 3 we wanted to continue speech therapy sessions, but our insurance wouldn't cover them," continues Bridget. "We were referred to USD Scottish Rite by one of our speech therapists."

USD Scottish Rite was able to provide speech therapy to Koby through a sliding fee scale. He started there 3 1/2 years ago.

"Financially, USD Scottish Rite was a tremendous help, we didn't have to worry about insurance not being able to cover everything," continues Jamie. "But also the staff is amazing, they are always thinking of fun things to keep him involved and interested in his sessions."

Koby gets one-on-one attention during his sessions. Part of his therapy is using a computer to help him know when he is correctly making sounds. He learned that sounds like "m" or "n" come through his nose, while sounds like "cat" come through his mouth. He also gets to play different games while working on his speech.

"I love doing the scavenger hunts," adds Koby. "And I like the board games and the computer – I love to read."

Koby is now a healthy and energetic six year old, who has just started kindergarten in Worthing. His speech has progressed greatly, but he still has one 50 minute session each week at USD Scottish Rite to continue his progress.

And thanks to Sioux Empire United Way, over 740 children, who also have speech and language disorders, are provided the therapy they need through USD Scottish Rite. Helping those children learn to communicate, "Koby wouldn't be where he is in terms of communication without USD Scottish Rite," adds Bridget.

