

Carrie and Jeremy Adler share the story of their son, Carter, and his journey with Thrive Alliance

In April 2009, our son, Carter, was born. What should have been an exciting and joyous time for us as first-time parents was instead a period of fear and uncertainty. Carter was born with several serious medical conditions, including a congenital



diaphragmatic hernia, congenital heart defects, airway complications, and gastrointestinal issues.

He spent the first seven months of his life in the NICU at Cincinnati Children's Hospital where he underwent three major surgeries and countless procedures. Our days were filled with "hospital life", which included everything from learning the nuances of all the beeping and blinking machines keeping him fed and breathing, to the daily rounds with our doctors and consultations with specialists. While we formed valuable relationships with his nurses and



Carter shortly after he came home and when we started receiving services with Thrive Alliance's help.

therapists during that time, all we looked forward to was bringing our little boy home one day.

When Carter was strong enough for the discussions to finally evolve to include the word "discharge", we could not be more happy as our goal that seemed so out of reach at times was becoming a reality. However, we also quickly became aware of new

challenges that would be presented to us and bring more worry, with how we would transition all the specialized care and support he needed to our home.

Carter's needs included around the clock G-tube feeding, medication administration (via PICC line) and oxygen support, as well as constant vitals monitoring. When we were in the "cocoon" of the hospital, as bad as that was, everything Carter needed was right there taken care of for us. When it came time to go home to Columbus, Indiana, 90 miles away, it meant that we needed help. What we ended up receiving was more than we could have hoped for.

Thrive Alliance, at the time we knew it as Aging and Community Services of South Central Indiana, was the agency we were connected to at the hospital even before Carter was discharged who ultimately would help us with the transition support we required and so much more. We were assigned a Care

Manager (her name is Amber Scherer) who immediately became our lifeline to the hundreds of questions we didn't have the answers for. Starting with helping get Carter's Initial Plan of Care outlined and setup, to making sure the critical forms and paperwork to get his Aged & Disabled

Waiver application submitted so we could get it approved for his insurance coverage, we had our hands held along the many paths in making sure we could get him these needed programs. This continued through our transition home as our care manager helped with other important areas of Carter's support, including helping facilitate our home nursing and respite care, therapy services, and making sure we knew where to secure necessary supplies, services, providers and how to get through all the administrative processes needed to support Carter in those first several years of his life.



The web of complexity needed to navigate and engage all these services when you have a child with special needs can be very intimidating. Our care manager was always very responsive to emails, calls, and if she didn't know the answer to something or wasn't the right point of contact, would make sure we were pointed in the correct direction and given the information we needed to make sure we could overcome whatever challenge we were facing at the time.

Our experience working with Thrive Alliance was an extremely positive one, even though it was during a period in our lives that we often look back on which contained a lot of stress and trepidation for us.

Through that help, as well as a lot of hard work by Carter himself, by the time he was ready to start kindergarten he had progressed to the point where many of the services we had initially needed and relied on for his first 5 years of life were no longer required. In the same way that we celebrated when he finally came home from the hospital, Carter once again "graduated" past other milestones and after several years he was no longer dependent on oxygen or his G-tube, and we could say a happy "goodbye and thank you" to our care manager.



Carter at age 5 when he started kindergarten and we started to "graduate" from some of the services.



Carter at age 14 from last summer, right before he started high school!

Today Carter is a 15-year old who is in his sophomore year of high school and is thriving in many ways, including participating in Taekwondo where he has achieved the rank of Black Belt! Carter continues to amaze us when we look back at how far he has come from those early years, and thinking back to the help he had, we are truly appreciative of those that were there for us, such as Thrive Alliance, as Carter wouldn't be where he is today without the support we received.



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