

Child's Language **EXPLODES** With Help From Scottish Rite Clinic

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A newspaper article from America's heartland shows how therapy provided by the Scottish Rite can help a child overcome major obstacles.

Benjamin Kaul enjoys his speech therapy session with Julia Borgreen, MA, CCC, Speech/Language Pathologist, at the Scottish Rite Childhood Language Disorders Center in Great Falls, Montana.

Ben is one of about 600 children in Great Falls, Montana, who have been helped by the Scottish Rite Childhood Language Disorders Clinic.

"The clinic has done wonderful things for him," Ben's grandmother, Sharon Holzheimer, said.

"He can communicate with us now. They never charged us a dime for all they have done for us, and now they're throwing a Christmas party for us!"



From birth, Ben had multiple disabilities and special needs. At 8 months, he needed throat surgery to allow him to breathe, and last year his tonsils and adenoids were removed. Last summer, Ben still wasn't talking, and a school special education teacher recommended the Great Falls Scottish Rite Clinic. Help was immediate.

Ben was diagnosed with developmental verbal dyspraxia. "These are children struggling to make the sounds of speech," said Julia Borgreen, the clinic's Director. "They know the words, but they have trouble getting them out." Borgreen has been working with Ben one afternoon a week on repetitive exercises to teach him how to make sounds. Oddly enough, Ben's breakthrough came when he began to learn sign language. For the first time, a bright youngster could communicate. "Ben was incredible," Borgreen said. "He learned two signs, went home and taught them to everyone. Suddenly, his vocabulary just exploded."

Sandy Meech, who has been a speech pathologist in Great Falls public schools for more than three decades, said "Early intervention gives children an advantage. If we catch them early, the window is open, and they can learn so much faster. As children get older, that window starts to close, and it gets harder to make such improvement. The Scottish Rite Language Clinic also makes a tremendous difference. I've seen children far behind in speech and language skills at 3 and 4 years old improve so much that they can do really well in kindergarten, feeling good about themselves and doing well academically. Helping speech-impaired kids allows them to grow. Kids who don't receive help may act out behaviorally or just withdraw completely and become little mice in the corner."

Ben was beginning to show those frustrations, his mother said. "It got to the point where his grandmother couldn't watch him at all because she couldn't understand him. She got frustrated, and he got frustrated. But now, they can spend time together." Part of their success, Meech said, is that the Scottish Rite clinic works with kids one-on-one to provide individual help. Another part is that the clinic works closely with parents. According to Meech, "Therapy in an office isn't enough. It has to be carried over into the home, and Scottish Rite is good at that."

The Scottish Rite clinic in Great Falls was the first in Montana when it opened its doors in 1992. Today, there also are clinics in Missoula and Billings. And there are about 160 others around the country. "The Masons are a very civic-minded group," Borgreen said. "They do a wonderful job not only for Great Falls but also for the surrounding area, covering all of North Central Montana."

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