

# Expanding a Child's Horizons



*Lena Harms*

Four-year-old Thayden calls her little sister Lena's feeding tube her "tubey and her button." The "button" is in the middle of young Lena's belly where mom, Toni Harms, attaches a feeding tube for her meals. At night, the baby is hooked to a feeding machine that provides nourishment to her little body. But on this particular day, Lena, 1, has little time for feeding. She is eager to get back onto the floor where she can crawl, something she just learned to do a few days ago.

This is the home of Toni and Chance Harms in Grand County, a place where Lena has experienced encouraging strides in her young life.

Lena was a full term baby, but in utero her nervous and digestive systems did not fully develop to that of a full term baby. Her immature nervous and digestive systems were comparable to a baby who had been born two months premature. From the start, Lena's mother, who has two other children, knew "something just wasn't right" with her newborn.

Lena had difficulty consuming foods and had problems related to a sluggish metabolism. At three weeks, she was hooked to feeding tubes and oxygen monitors. Around six months, her troubles with keeping food down and her battles with low weight continued as she underwent a barrage of tests. Doctors eventually diagnosed an underdeveloped stomach, a hernia above her esophagus and severe reflux problems as well as food allergies. At 10 months, the baby underwent three surgeries. "She was basically starving for the first 10 months of her life, and we had no idea," Toni said.

It was Lena's pediatrician who early on recommended Horizons to the Harms. Horizons' therapists have been visiting the residence throughout Lena's development, teaching her feeding and motor skills.

Horizons' early intervention therapists have helped the family use equipment necessary to Lena's nourishment, and the organization has helped pay gasoline expenses for hospital trips to Denver.

Without Horizons, "We would feel really lost right now," Toni said.

"I don't know what I would have done without Horizons," said Karissa Gagnon, also of Grand County. When Karissa's daughter, Ellie, was 2 years old, she was referred to Horizons by her Day Care teacher who noticed Ellie had delays in her speech, coupled with a lack of social comfort typical for most children her age. At two, Ellie would memorize anything she could and her only speech was borrowed from others. She had little pretend play and seemed to have little original thought, her mother said. She would repeat phrases throughout the day "like



*Ellie Gagnon*



In some cases, early intervention can lessen the need for costly therapy and services later in life. If you have concerns about a child's development, call the Horizons' office in your county to schedule a free developmental screening.

a broken record, but we think now that this was her way of learning speech.”

Horizons' speech and occupational therapists worked with Ellie, and she was then able to attend preschool where her creativity, social skills and academic thirsts were nurtured. “She just blossomed,” mom Karissa said. “She's talking more and socializing better. She doesn't memorize books anymore. She makes different stories for the books she reads.” Having what's suspected to be a photographic memory, Ellie now converses with others - considered a huge advancement - and tells them about what she has learned, like the anatomy of dolphins or the habits of Bengal tigers. Ellie is now more than ready for Kindergarten. Mom says, “Ellie still has a little bit of delay, but she works a computer better than I do and at 4 and a half; it's frightening.”

Throughout Ellie's early development, Horizons helped Ellie's parents to better understand their child's strengths and weaknesses.

“As a mom, you're always expecting the worst because you're trying to protect yourself and your child. So it's kind of like a defense mechanism,” Karissa said. “Then I would go talk to Horizons' therapists, and they would say, ‘That's not that abnormal.’ “This happens to a lot of kids,” or “she's going to grow out of this.” “So a lot of it was easing my fears in a big way.”

- Tonya Bina

Horizons, a nonprofit organization providing services in the five counties in northwest Colorado, presently provides services to 72 children, ages birth to three years of age, who have developmental delays and disabilities. Therapy early in a child's development can ensure a brighter future by helping the child reach his or her fullest developmental potential. Anyone can refer a child birth to three who they have a concern about. Referrals come from friends, neighbors, physicians, day care providers or parents. Once a referral is received, the family is contacted within 2 days to set an appointment for a free screening. If indicated or the parent desires, Horizons will continue the process with a full assessment (with two or more therapists) to determine if the child is eligible for our program. If eligibility is established, a Family Service Plan is written based on parental



concerns and priorities. Services are provided to the child in his natural surroundings (at home, at child care, in the park) and reviewed on a regular basis. Upon reaching age three, a child who still needs services transitions into the public school system, usually by way of the Board of Cooperative Education Services (B.O.C.E.S.) pre-school.

In some cases, early intervention can lessen the need for costly therapy and services later in life. If you have concerns about a child's development, call the Horizons office in your county to schedule a free developmental screening.



## **Yampa Valley Autism Program Mission Statement:**

The Yampa Valley Autism Program will assist and support individuals with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities to reach their potential. The Program will strive to maximize quality of life for these individuals and their families through the provisions of family support service, vital training of qualified personnel, updated education resources, public awareness and advocacy support.

## **“A National Health Crisis...”**

Somewhere every 20 minutes an individual is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

Ten years ago, most people didn't know much about this medical condition. The rate of incidence has now grown to 1 in 150 and even more startling, 1 in 94 boys will receive this diagnosis, usually before the age of two. This is more than childhood diabetes or cancer.

Autism, and its related disabilities, is a neurobiological disorder that impairs an individual's ability to communicate and relate socially to others. The spectrum is broad. Symptoms can be mild or severe, and it manifests itself by rigid and repetitive routines, excessive tantrums and heightened sensory issues. Some children are non-verbal and self injurious. Currently, there is no known cause or cure. However, with the research dollars and public awareness we are experiencing, we are closer to finding the missing pieces of this puzzle.

As grim as these statistics appear, there is hope for our kids and their families. Early intervention and treatment started as soon as the “red flags” appear make a dramatic impact on outcomes. Occupational and speech therapy, coupled with behavioral modification, show promising results. Most of our kids need physical therapy to improve motor skills and general quality of life. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that family physicians and pediatricians screen twice for this disorder, first at 18 months and then again at 24 months. A child with autism, or a related disability such as Asperger's Syndrome, should be actively engaged in an intensive intervention program at least 25 hours per week. Early intervention has a positive impact on maximizing the potential of individuals as they reach adulthood enabling them to become a productive member of our community.

Yampa Valley Autism Program (Y.V.A.P.) works with local physicians to provide this screening. We also provide financial scholarships based on need to help cover the cost of the 25 hours of weekly therapy. Yampa Valley Medical Pediatric Therapy Services offers these programs covering many of the therapies described above. Children birth to three are also eligible for therapy services from Horizons Specialized Services. Along with home programming, social development programs and adaptive recreation,

these children can be helped to reach their potential.

Y.V.A.P. provides two phases of respite for families. Autism is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Finding child care just to run errands or have a quiet evening can be impossible. We provide the parents 10 hours a month, utilizing a list of highly trained caregivers to come to their home. Once a month parents can drop their child and siblings off at our Little House for a few hours. We provide one-on-one supervision with a nurse in attendance at all times. This program continues to grow and allows our parents a “breather” from the challenge of caring for their child.

The emotional and negative financial impact on our families cannot be understated. Early intervention treatments can be expensive and, up until now, insurance coverage was limited and often denied. The good news is that the Governor of Colorado just signed a bill that will require insurance carriers to provide funds for early intervention and ongoing therapies. Individuals from the ages of 0-19 will be covered. Y.V.A.P. was proud to have participated in this important piece of legislation that will help ease the weight of this troubling disorder.

### **“RED FLAGS”**

- No words by 16 months • Little or no eye contact
- No back and forth gestures, sharing of sounds and smiles
- Repetitive behaviors and inflexibility with routines
- Excessive tantrums • Preference of being alone

If you or someone you know has concerns about a child's development, do not wait. Speak to a physician about having the child screened no matter their age. Yampa Valley Autism Program can help you find the resources and help that is needed. Now more than ever there is reason for hope and better outcomes. Yampa Valley Autism Program provides services in the five counties of northwest Colorado. For more information about our programs and services, call 970-870-6257.

Lu Etta Loeber  
Executive Director  
Yampa Valley Autism Program

# COUNTIES UP CLOSE

## **Grand County**

Roberta Hovermale, Horizons' service coordinator in Grand County, nominated the Nixon family of Granby to be considered for a Habitat for Humanity home. We are happy to report that the Nixon's were selected and construction has begun. Congratulations to the Nixon's and thank you, Roberta!

## **Jackson County**

The town of Walden is celebrating their 100th anniversary this year. Part of the celebration was the North Park Art in the Park held on June 6, 2009. Several volunteers and Roberta Hovermale, Horizons' service coordinator for Grand and Jackson Counties, manned an information booth at the event. It was a great opportunity to spotlight Horizons and the services we provide to families in Jackson County.

## **Moffat County**

Horizons was selected to be the beneficiary of the 2008 Yahoo Golf Ball Drop. The ball drop is part of the Yahoo Golf Tournament held in Craig each September. Every year a lucky non-profit organization sells golf balls that are dropped from a crop duster airplane over the 18th hole. The numbered ball closest to the pin wins the grand prize. This was the second time in three years we were chosen to join in the fun. We are so grateful for the opportunity.

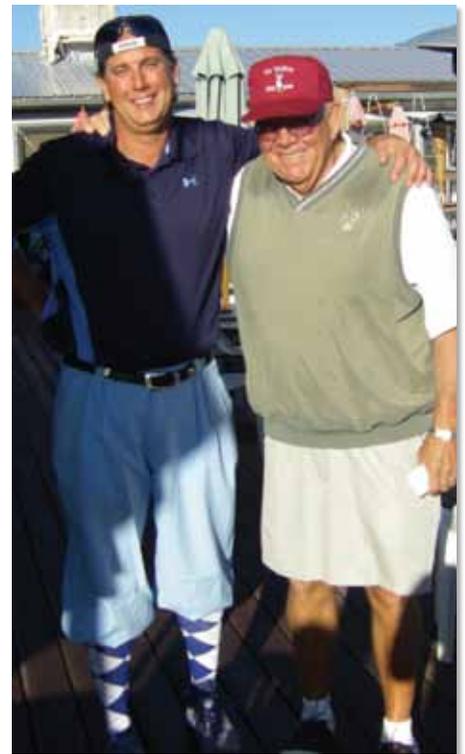


## **Rio Blanco County**

Welcome Pat Thompson, our new service coordinator for our Rio Blanco programs. Pat worked in an Early Intervention program in California before moving to Meeker in 1990. After her arrival in northwest Colorado, she spent 17 years in the employ of the Department of Social Services until her retirement. Pat saw the opportunity to, once again, work with infants and children when she learned Horizons was looking for a part-time service coordinator. Pat's previous experience, coupled with her love of working with children and families, has given Pat a "job she loves".

## **Routt County**

Horizons purchased a house on the west side of Steamboat Springs early in 2009. A new group home was established to serve four of our adult clients. The long-time roommates love their new surroundings, and their backyard where they barbecue and entertain their friends.



*Pete Heuer and Tom Knez*

# Rebecca Ann Adams Green



We want to dedicate this space to remembering Rebecca Ann Adams Green, who died in a tragic accident at Fish Creek Falls on June 13, 2009.

Rebecca was a speech/language pathologist with a bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska and a master's degree from Ball State University in Indiana. She and her husband, Rodney, moved their two children, Rachel and Kade, to Steamboat Springs in 2004. She loved nature, the mountains, snow, camping, climbing Colorado's 14ers and anything they could do together as a family.

As a speech therapist for Horizons, she met children in their homes and often became a member of their extended family. Rebecca went above and beyond to explore each family's unique needs, and would seek out additional training and resources to assist each child.

She was also everyone's favorite volunteer from being a Girl Scout leader to Sunday school teacher to homeroom mom and more. Every group she touched noted how "in the moment" she always was, and how important and special she made everyone feel.

Horizons has been greatly blessed to have known such a compassionate, caring individual and to have had her work with our families and children. Rebecca will be greatly missed.

Horizons is working diligently to conserve resources, both natural and financial. Therefore, we are inviting you to have your name removed from our mailing list if you no longer wish to receive correspondences from Horizons.

We hope you enjoy hearing from us, but if you prefer to have your name removed, please email Kay Borvansky, [kayathorizons@yahoo.com](mailto:kayathorizons@yahoo.com), or call 970-879-4466

Thank you.



*Horizons achieved Gold Planet Certification from the Sustainable Business Program of the Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association*

## Foundation Support



LIONS CLUB OF FRASER VALLEY



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS BOARD OF REALTORS



THE DENVER FOUNDATION

*Vine, Oak & Holly Fund*



YVEA Caring Consumers Foundation

# Above and Beyond

Each February, Alliance hosts Developmental Disabilities Day at the Capitol. The day includes resolutions in the state house and senate, and an awards luncheon attended by dozens of legislators, including Senator Al White and Representative Randy Baumgardner. Alliance honored direct care counselors for the first time by requesting nominations from all over Colorado for a Direct Support Professional of the Year award.

Nominees at Horizons were Susan Nayden, Chris Becea and Deb Kirby.

Sue Nayden is a 21-year employee of Horizons. She delivers her special brand of caring and compassion to the residents of our Maple Street Group home in Steamboat Springs. Sue is regarded by client families, clients and coworkers as a conscientious and dedicated caregiver and team leader.

Chris Becea is our Day Program Team Coordinator in Steamboat Springs. His leadership skills have made him a strong example of positive energy, understanding and good decision making. Because of his dedication to the environment, he is Horizons' Green Advocate, encouraging everyone to conserve energy and resources and educating staff and clients on how to be good stewards of our planet.



From Left: Bridget Schneider, Deb Kirby, Chris Collins *Executive Director of Alliance*, Michael Toothaker, *Adult Community Coordinator of Moffat County*

Deb Kirby, who coordinates Horizons' Day Program in Moffat County, was not only nominated for the Alliance award, but was also selected as a finalist. She has created an exceptional day program for our clients with her enthusiasm, dedication and organizational skills. Deb has collaborated with other staff and service agencies in the community to ensure every client can enthusiastically participate in all the educational, social and physical activities she has made available to them. Congratulations to you all!

## Planned Giving

Planned Giving is the term used to describe a way to distribute assets to family members and organizations. There are several means to achieve this way of leaving a legacy, such as wills, gift annuities, charitable trusts, pooled income funds and life insurance.

Your legacy will support Horizons and the people who depend on us for care long into the future.

If you need more information on planned giving, please contact Horizons' Central Office at 970-879-4466 X 108 to speak to Susan Mizen, Executive Director, or talk to your accountant or attorney.

## 2008 Little Points of Light

Eric & Beverly Abell  
Gay Albers & Gregory Roberts  
Robert & Kathleen Anger  
Shirley Bailey  
Betti Barnes, Loyd's Cleaners  
Tom & Sue Beachman  
Betty & Joel Bechtel  
James & Nancy Belk  
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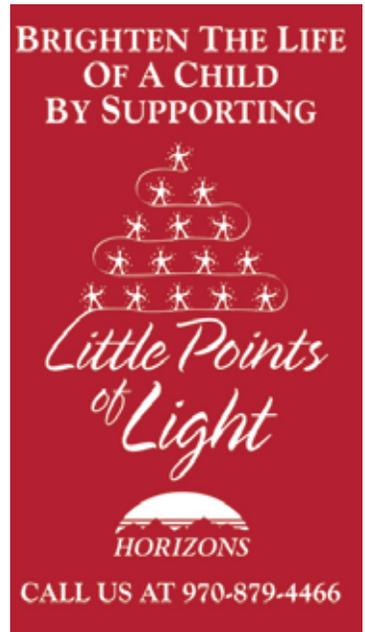
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Jerry & Mary Kafka  
Merle & Bonita Linton

## Little Points of Light Cont.

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Dan & Betty McIntyre  
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### Central Administration Office

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970.879.4466 Phone  
970.870.0334 Fax

### Routt Family Services

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970.871.8558 Phone  
970.870.8568 Fax

### Moffat Adult Services

P.O. Box 1483 (Mail)  
439 Breeze, Suite 100  
Craig, CO 81626  
970.824.7804 Phone  
970.824.2643 Fax

### Rio Blanco Services

P.O. Box 2114 (Mail)  
685 Main Street, Suite #1  
Meeker, CO 81641  
970.878.3196 Phone  
970.878.3196 Fax

### Routt County Adult Day Program

P.O. Box 774867 (Mail)  
100 Park Avenue  
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477  
970.871.4800 Phone  
970.871.6013 Fax

### Moffat Family Services

P.O. Box 1483 (Mail)  
439 Breeze, Suite 100  
Craig, CO 81626  
970.824.7381 Phone  
970.824.2643 Fax

### Grand & Jackson Services

P.O. Box 186 (Mail)  
81 West Jasper  
Granby, CO 80446  
970.887.1141 Phone  
970.887.1141 Fax



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*Horizons works in partnership  
with families and communities  
to expand opportunities for  
individuals with, or at risk of,  
developmental disabilities.*