



**Thank You Impact 100**  
Because of You  
Stepping Stones' Sensory Needs Respite  
is changing lives of children with  
severe autism & challenging behaviors



# Stepping Stones

## Sensory Needs Respite and Support Program

*Final Report to Impact 100*

6-23-14

The Impact 100 award of \$112,000 in 2011 created the Sensory Needs Respite and Support Program, which opened as a pilot program in 2013 and is now in its first full year of providing overnight respites for children with severe autism and extreme behaviors.

### Growing Community Support:

The Impact 100 funds provided the specialized equipment, infrastructure, initial planning and training that made this dream a reality for families across Greater Cincinnati. Because of the strong program launch, this critical program has received sustaining funding from the Pfau Foundation, The Robert Reakirt/PNC Foundation, Cincinnati Rotary Foundation, Huenefeld Trust, Push America, The Spaulding Foundation, Louise Taft Semple Foundation and Macy's.

The Push America support was two-fold. This national Pi Kappa Phi fraternity sent its Push America work crews over two separate weeks to install the outdoor activity trail (working in rain and mud for several of those days) as well as providing \$5,000 in funding. Other grants ranged from \$2,300 to \$35,000 for a total of \$156,300 on top of the \$112,000 from Impact 100.

### About the Program:

Stepping Stones' Sensory Needs Respite and Support program has served a total of 16 families in 2013 and 14 families in the first half of 2014.

We started the project serving only boys because autism affects a significantly larger number of boys than girls. At the end of 2013 we opened the program to girls, with girls and boys respites on alternating weekends. We have found many parents of girls are initially apprehensive about their daughters being away overnight when they have such severe challenges. The program's success has bolstered confidence and we have strong interest for the fall sessions from both girls' and boys' families and we expect to have 16 to 20 students in the 2014-15 school year.

These children have massive behavior challenges including violent outbursts, self-injuries including biting, scratching and banging their head into walls and furniture. Many are so disruptive in schools that they have been removed from classrooms.

The program has helped mitigate violent behaviors and identify strategies that help children safely deal with excess energy and sensory needs. Children are functioning better in their home and school settings and several have strengthened key interaction skills. The program has improved communication skills and helped families identify equipment that they can use at home and school to help children function safely. This is the only program of its kind in Greater Cincinnati. It helps families and children deal with sensory and behavior challenges and it also provides a critical break for the families of these children who have such heartbreaking and demanding needs.

Here are the results on meeting program goals:

**Goal: 80% of participants will be successful at two new self-help skills during the programs.**

100% of participants gained two or more self-help skills during the program. These were things like cleaning up after programming activities, putting dishes away, asking for help using communication devices or preferred communication.

**Goal: 80% of participants will show a decrease in incidents of aggression during the programs.**

94% of participants showed a decrease in incidents of aggression during the programs.

**50% of participants will show an increase in their ability to share spaces with other participants – a key skill that will impact ability to participate safely in school and other recreational and family activities.**

93% increased their ability to share spaces with other participants.

**80% of participants will increase their amount of physical activity during the course of the season.**

100% increased activity levels, a major need for many of the children we serve.

Here are some of the personal results:

**Andrew M.** arrived exhibiting extreme behaviors that would exhaust him, leading to an eat-and-bed routine. Staff worked with him to identify patterns and develop a schedule that adjusted the timing of sensory room use and other activities. He now has successful respites, participates in activities and looks forward to the program.

**Jake G.** used to struggle with spending overnight away from home. He would fight to stay in the car. Now he hops out of the car laughing and engages successfully in activities and programming.

**Sidnee C.** had been moved from school to school. She has a rare sensory disorder that can be disruptive in group settings. This was her first experience with staying overnight. She has had marked success in fine and gross motor activities and has gained confidence in the program.

**Josh C.** and **Brendan V.** have significant communication and social interaction challenges. In this program, they have learned to share space and moved progressively toward greater interaction. The two have now forged a friendship and look forward to interacting together on activities – a major behavior breakthrough.

**Michael J's** mom reported at Michael's initial meeting with Stepping Stones that he was not an active young man. He preferred to sit in his recliner at home and watch TV. At the Sensory Needs Respite, Michael takes long hikes, rides an adult sized tricycle and spends at least half of his weekend successfully engaged in gross motor activities.

Our staff works closely with parents to help translate successes in the program to successes at home and school. One child showed such progress using the program-provided I-pad that his parents purchased the same model and loaded the same Apps. The parents and staff work together, sharing successful communication strategies and apps, assuring a seamless communication strategy for this child. We have worked with parents and grandparents to develop new bedtime and mealtime routines that eliminate triggers for frustration that leads to behavior escalation.

This program would not be here without Impact 100.

All of us at Stepping Stones and the families we serve are immensely grateful.

With warmest appreciation,



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**NOTE: Final budget information is attached**