



July 2019

EASTERSEALSDFVR.ORG/DONATE

More than 30 years ago, a group of volunteers started child care for children with and without disabilities at Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley in Villa Park. Today, the Lily Garden Child Care Center is still the only inclusive child care in DuPage County.

This one-of-a-kind daycare is where children of all abilities learn and grow together. We provide child care to families with nowhere else to turn, and we've shaped the future for hundreds of children. Every day I see children with and without disabilities making friendships they wouldn't have found anywhere else. We foster curiosity, creativity and care in each child – qualities that stick with them long after they've left our classrooms.

Choosing the right daycare is one of the most important decisions parents make. For well over 1,000 families, the Lily Garden has been an easy choice. We are the only place with teachers who are specially trained to support children with disabilities. And we are the only place where typically developing children learn to embrace and adapt to the differences that make each person special.



It's a privilege to be entrusted with children in their most formative and impressionable years. But providing quality, inclusive child care doesn't come without costs. Tuition supports basic daily needs, but donations are what make our inclusive model possible. Every day we find ways for each child to be 100% included, but we can't do that without your help.

Please make a gift to support the distinctions that set the Lily Garden apart.

Here are some of the ways your donation can make a difference:

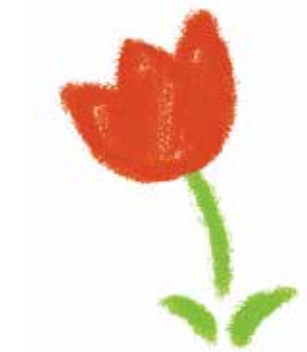
- \$15 will fund one hour of inclusive child care
- \$47 will provide a month of hot lunches for a child with nutrition challenges
- \$102 will purchase one summer's worth of sandbox toys
- \$210 will support arts and crafts supplies for one month
- \$460 will purchase a year's supply of books
- \$920 will cover one iPad Pro with educational apps



In my 19 years with the Lily Garden, I've seen hundreds of children come through our classrooms. They start as infants and develop into confident preschoolers – gaining the knowledge and skills they need for kindergarten along the way. But some of the greatest transformations come from the lessons the children teach each other.

On the following pages you can read about a few of the experiences that define the impact of the Lily Garden. We provide a lifeline for parents, an influential environment for children, and a team of clinical experts to support early childhood development. Above all, we promote acceptance and celebrate differences every single day.

Please make a gift that will shape the future for children with and without disabilities.



Sincerely,

Melissa Jimenez

*Director, Lily Garden Child Care Center
at Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley*

next page 

HUNTER

Hunter was one of the first children with a feeding tube to come through the Lily Garden. An unexplained brain injury at birth left him unable to swallow, speak or walk. It also made it critical for his mom, Paige, to preserve her career so she could maintain her health insurance benefits. The Lily Garden offered Paige the only skilled, affordable and inclusive child care option for Hunter. It was a lifeline for her family that made it possible for her to return to work and ease back into her daily life. Knowing that Hunter's teachers and therapists were working together to coordinate his care and support his goals was a big relief.

Paige describes Hunter's Lily Garden friends as his guardian angels – always looking out for him and finding ways to include him in their games. She remembers these years as Hunter's brightest. This socialization did wonders for Hunter, but it also made his typically developing classmates more aware, sensitive and compassionate.

Once one of Hunter's preschool friends was playing with a doll. She had taken a piece of tubing from another toy and attached it to the doll's belly. When a teacher asked about it, she was met with a matter-of-fact response: "I'm feeding my baby." Hunter taught her that there was more than one way to eat.



"I don't know what we would have done without the Lily Garden."

Paige, Hunter's Mom

LAUREN

Lauren Merry's experience in the Lily Garden set the course for her future. She was a typically developing child who stood out for her kindness, inquisitiveness and strawberry blonde hair. From a young age it was clear to Lauren that having different abilities didn't change a child's desire or ability to play, it just changed *how* they played.

She pursued a bioengineering degree at the University of Illinois with a focus on the biomechanics of joints. She was involved in a hospital research study, analyzing the gait of children with spina bifida and helping develop a therapy plan. Later, as a development engineer for a medical devices company, she helped design and test artificial joints used in prosthetics.

At the root of her work are lessons and experiences she gained from Easterseals and the Lily Garden. She applies them daily in the workplace, "Even in a typically developing environment people learn or interact differently, so you have to find common ways to communicate to live and learn together."

She credits the community at Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley with introducing her to incredible role models who embody clinical excellence, empathy, education and dedication to their profession. Many would say the same about Lauren and how she approaches each work day: "I can. So I should do my best for those who would if they could."



Lauren 1987



Lauren 2019

"We were all just kids playing together."

Lauren, Lily Garden Graduate

next page 



OWEN



By the time Owen graduated from the toddler room, he was ready for a new classroom to explore and some older classmates to chase. His language was developing on track and his parents figured he would soon outgrow his slushy pronunciation of words like “truck” and “fish.”

But his teachers noticed that he seemed distracted at story time and was sometimes slow to respond when they called his name. They recommended an audiology evaluation which revealed that some fluid was muffling his hearing. Even after a simple surgical procedure for ear tubes, his hearing tests were still scoring outside of the typical range. Repeat tests revealed a sensorineural hearing loss that had been mild enough to overlook, but significant enough to require hearing aids.

Within six months of his hearing aid fitting he graduated from speech therapy and was fully engaged in classroom activities. The improvement was more profound than his parents expected. If his teachers hadn't been so tuned into his development, his parents are convinced that he would have started kindergarten with an undiagnosed delay and fallen behind.

Having access to a pediatric audiologist at Easterseals was a big plus, and so was the inclusive and accepting environment. Owen's classmates were unfazed by his new accessories. One friend even went home asking her parents when she could get hearing aids, while another tried to fashion hearing aids for her doll out of Play-Doh and rubber bands. The Lily Garden normalized Owen's hearing impairment and made the transition easier for him and his parents.

“They prevented him from falling behind.”

Brian, Owen's Dad

PLEASE SUPPORT

INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

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Lily Garden Child Care Center

at  **easterseals**
DuPage & Fox Valley

