



# A STEP AHEAD

INSPIRED BY CHILDREN

MOTIVATED BY HOPE

**MISSION**  
Supporting families of infants and toddlers with special needs by enhancing their development and relationships both at home and in their community.



**WHERE SPECIAL NEEDS FIND A HOME**





## GET TO KNOW A STEP AHEAD IN PIERCE COUNTY



**A Step Ahead in Pierce County is one of the region's most progressive organizations for children ages birth to three who have one or more developmental delays. We provide convenient, home-based therapy and educational services, including speech, physical and occupational therapies and special education.**

Our dedicated team of professionals includes physical and occupational therapists, special education teachers, speech therapists and others, all working together with each child's special needs in mind. We address family concerns, involve caregivers in every step and customize a plan to benefit every child.

Just as no two children are the same, developmental delays often manifest in various ways. A delay may be identified at birth by a genetic or chromosomal disability (such as Down Syndrome); an unexpected delay may appear as the child grows and milestones fall short; or an unfortunate traumatic event, such as an accident or prenatal drug exposure, may result in a temporary or permanent delay.



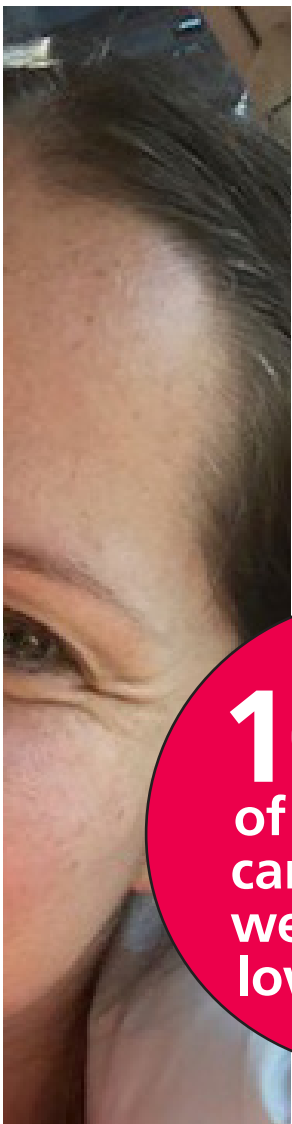
**A Step Ahead  
in Pierce  
County  
annually serves  
over 700  
children**

With the opioid crisis, we are serving more babies that have been drug impacted at birth and children who have been subjected to horrible traumatic abuse and removed from their homes.



**"I STILL REMEMBER  
OUR ASSESSMENT  
VISIT. WHEN I WAS  
ASKED HOW MANY  
WORDS MY DAUGHTER  
USED I SAID 10. BUT  
WHEN WE STARTED  
COUNTING UP THE  
WORDS , I FOUND  
OUT THAT SHE ONLY  
KNEW 5 WORDS. AT  
THAT MOMEMENT, I  
REALIZED SHE HAD  
DELAYS— IT WAS  
DEVASTATING."**





**100%**  
of the foster  
care children  
we serve are  
low-income.

## CARES FUND

This fund helps to cover the costs of uncompensated care, so ASAPC can ensure that every child receives the necessary therapeutic support they need. Donations to this fund also support other wrap-around services, such as our community-based field trips and play groups, as well as therapy and teaching supplies and equipment.

## BOOST

A Step Ahead in Pierce County is the only agency in the region offering specialized early intervention care to any infant or toddler in foster care. Our BOOST program does not require children to have a developmental delay, but supports both the child and foster parent through the difficult transition out of traumatic abuse and into safety. This program is entirely dependent on generous donations and grants.





## OUR HISTORY

A Step Ahead in Pierce County first opened its doors in 2001. Our name was chosen to describe not only the progress of children who enroll in our program, but also the forward-thinking culture of our nonprofit organization.

In 2000, birth to three services in our community were usually provided in specialized classes for toddlers with developmental delays. Although those classes certainly had a role in helping to develop social skills in young children, many parents were losing out on the significant benefits of a home visiting program.

A Step Ahead in Pierce County opened with the commitment to broaden the services delivered to children in their homes and childcares and to continue to offer progressive and proven options. We were the first organization to offer speech therapy in homes and were proud to help support the development of Language Preschools.

## OUR VALUES/ PRINCIPLES

- We will do our work in a way that treats the well-being of children as our highest priority.
- We will provide family-centered services in a manner that promotes trust, respect, and confidence with the families we serve.
- Our behaviors will be of the highest ethical standards. We will always conduct ourselves with compassion, sensitivity and honesty.
- We will demonstrate integrity through the operation of a transparent organization in the form of board oversight and fiscal responsibility.
- We will be both creative and collaborative in our approach to building a vital community.

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**BECAUSE WE BELIEVE— AND THE RESEARCH SUPPORTS— IN THE VALUE OF THERAPY AND TEACHING SERVICES TO IMPROVE HOW CHILDREN LEARN AND GROW, WE REGULARLY OFFER SERVICES TO FAMILIES EVEN WHEN REIMBURSEMENT ISN'T AVAILABLE. NO FAMILY IS EVER TURNED AWAY.**

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CANDY WATKINS, FOUNDER &  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





## DECKER'S STORY

### CRITICAL COMMUNICATION

# Arriving at the walk-in clinic, Maegan was scared.

She was having a medical emergency unable to breathe. Everything that morning was typically routine as Maegan helped her sons, Brody who is 5 and 2-year-old Decker, get ready for the day. Shortly after taking her vitamins, she began to feel extremely thirsty. She brushed it off, swallowed some water and headed out the door with the boys to take Brody to school. During the drive she felt like something wasn't quite right. Quickly she dropped Brody off and decided to drive directly to the clinic.

Struggling, she managed to get Decker out of his car seat, rushed inside, bypassed the line, and begged for help at the check-in window. "I Need Help!"

Abruptly, staff whisked Maegan away while another nurse carried Decker close to his mom. Medical staff rushed all around Maegan, applying monitors, taking her vitals, and asking questions she couldn't answer. It was getting worse. Maegan couldn't breathe, could feel her throat closing, and began to cough. She could barely utter a word

to explain her symptoms. She looked at Decker and hoped everything was going to be all right. Sitting on a chair in the corner of the room, a nurse was desperately trying to get as much information as possible from Decker.

Months before, shortly after Decker turned two, his parents observed that he wasn't talking at all. "We participated in many different playgroups and I noticed that Decker couldn't communicate like the other children." At home, his older brother Brody did most of







**"SPEECH THERAPY HAS BEEN THE BEST THING WE HAVE EVER DONE! IT HAS CHANGED ALL OF OUR LIVES IN AN AMAZING WAY."**

**— DECKER'S MOM**

the talking for Decker. Maegan and Keith also noticed that Decker would cry and have tantrums when he was unable to communicate his needs. In searching for help, they found A Step Ahead in Pierce County (ASAPC) and Decker immediately began working with David, a speech pathologist.

Maegan anxiously watched as Decker tried to explain to the nurse what had happened. Decker did the best he could to answer the nurse's questions. Previously, Maegan was the only person who could really

understand her son and now she desperately needed her son to communicate what was going on so the doctors could save her. It was at this moment that Maegan was so grateful that her son had been working with David so Decker could communicate during this emergency and be understood.

Today, Decker is confident, happy, able to communicate with his family his wants and needs. At first, Maegan and Keith were nervous to acknowledge that Decker was behind in speech but working with

ASAPC has made this such an easy and positive experience. Decker absolutely adores his therapist, David and looks forward to the days that he gets to work with him. Although Maegan still has to manage her health issues, she is confident that Decker, if faced with an emergency again, will have the confidence to save her life.





## JACKSON'S STORY

### NO LIMITS



Being a new parent is exciting, especially watching your child's developmental progress unfold before your eyes. Each milestone, such as engaging smiles, taking their first roll from back to front, and uttering their first sounds, is a call for celebration. Jackson was Brittany and John's first child- a healthy beautiful happy baby who filled their daily lives with love.

Most toddlers can say about 20 words by the time they are 18 months old, yet, Jackson's word vocabulary was sparse saying occasionally "mamma", "dada" and sometimes "ball". **Brittany and John began to worry and sought out help.**

They began therapy at a center nearby, but Jackson wasn't happy. Brittany and John knew it just wasn't the right fit. Jackson wasn't fond of strangers and avoided eye contact. He struggled socially

and emotionally. "This wasn't the place for us", so Brittany and John continued their search.

A friend referred them to A Step Ahead in Pierce County. Met by a wrap-around team of specialists, led by Maurene the Family Resource Coordinator, a therapeutic plan was developed. Soon after speech therapy sessions started, but Jackson started to react the same way as before.

Brittany wondered if they would ever find someone for Jackson. "I felt so bad because she was so nice, but it just wasn't a right fit for our son." So Brittany conveyed their concerns. Undaunted, Maurene replied, "That's why we're here. We'll figure this out. We want to give each child the best opportunities for success."





Immediately the new service provider was deployed. Session after session, Jackson began to feel comfortable and even crawled into their laps, which had never happened before. Seeing this new change, Brittany was so happy she advocated for a new provider because they received the perfect therapist for Jackson!

Verbal expression of language is how we communicate, but for Jackson this is a constant frustration. Jackson's Individualized Family Service Plan subsequently called for specialized instruction in speech, language, and occupational therapy.

However, their insurance plan only covered a certain number of visits. The additional sessions would put a tremendous financial strain on the family, but through generous donations they were approved for the CARES Fund which covered the rest of Jackson's sessions.

Through therapy, he has since adapted and takes his parents hands to show them what he wants. Jackson received therapeutic services with ASAPC until he aged out and immediately transitioned to preschool.

Brittany recalls his first week of preschool, "it was awful!" Unlike the home environment Jackson was familiar with, he had to learn to cope with teachers and people he had never met, his mother no longer stayed with him, and it was a new classroom environment. Such a frightening experience for a child who cannot speak! Every day that week Jackson cried on the way to preschool and then Brittany cried in the car after every drop-off.

Although this transition wasn't ideal, Brittany began to see the change in her son. By the next week, Jackson took the aid's hand and was willing to be led away from the safety of his

mother and soon began to grow in this new environment. He has grown so much since they first started this journey.

Today, Jackson still only babbles, but he is more independent and has made strong gains in developing his social and emotional skills. Brittany and John focus on his strengths – not limits. Jackson is capable of whatever he wants to do!

**"OUR ADVICE TO OTHER PARENTS, TRY NOT TO GET OVERWHELMED AND DISCOURAGED, THE ANSWERS ARE OUT THERE. DON'T DRAW THE LINE IN THE SAND BUT SEE THE RESILIENCY IN YOUR CHILD."**



## YOUR DONATION IN ACTION

Every child we see benefits from life-changing therapies. Yet, high deductibles, co-pays and lack of coverage make paying for services a challenge for many families. **Each family receives the maximum services their child needs regardless of their ability to pay.**



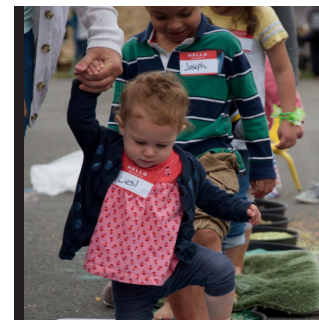
\$750

Provides a year of home services to a foster child to reduce the effects of abuse and neglect



\$500

Funds a month of therapy for a child without health benefits



\$350

Funds two months of therapy sessions for a child with state-provided insurance

# BE OUR AMBASSADORS

- Volunteer your time.
- Support us through Fred Meyer Rewards, iGive, Facebook Fundraisers and make us your preferred charity on Amazon Smile.
- Give Financial Support, Planned Giving, and Gifts of Stock at [www.asapc.org](http://www.asapc.org)
- Does your employer have a Matching Gifts Program?  
Most employers match donations dollar for dollar, but some companies triple or quadruple the amount, which equals more families we can serve.
- Arrange for a presentation speaker for your business staff meeting or service club.

## STAY IN THE LOOP

Keep up-to-date on the stories of success from our kids and their families through our newsletter or follow us on social media.



**\$200**  
Sponsors a child to attend a quarterly play group



**\$100**  
Sends 10 kids on a field trip to the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium



**\$50**  
Buys 10 specialized books for children during intake sessions





## CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

Do you have a business or know one that takes social responsibility seriously? We want to be their Partner! Corporate Charitable Contributions and Event Sponsorships available.

There are lots of ways to make an impact for these kids.

- **Become a Business Ambassador**

Now more than ever, businesses want to be involved in corporate philanthropy. Your business can be our Ambassador, promoting our services for either a corporate charitable contribution or event sponsorship, or employee volunteerism!

- **Create Your Own Fundraiser**

Hold a jeans day, team jersey, or ugly sweater contest at your workplace. Staff donate to participate, learn more about our services, and all proceeds benefit A Step Ahead in Pierce County.

**55%**  
of the children  
we serve  
are from  
low-income  
families.







“

**MY COMPANY IS ALL ABOUT OUR  
COMMUNITY. WE WANT TO HELP MAKE  
SURE THAT EVERY KID CAN GET  
THE SERVICES THAT THEY NEED.**

”

SCOTT LEINGANG, HERITAGE BANK





**"WE ARE SO  
GRATEFUL FOR  
EVERYTHING  
A STEP AHEAD HAS  
DONE FOR  
OUR FAMILY."  
- JACKSON'S PARENTS**



10324 Canyon Rd. E., Ste. 203  
Puyallup, WA 98373

O: 253.471.2727

F: 253.471.2730

