



## In the right environment, any child can thrive

The Meyer Center has been a critical part of the Upstate community for over 67 years, serving as a resource for children and families facing life with challenges beyond what most can imagine. At the Meyer Center, no child is ever turned away due to a family's inability to pay. This was the extraordinary vision of Dr. Meyer who founded the Meyer Center in 1954. His goal was to make sure that every child with disabilities has the chance to develop, to learn, to overcome and to succeed. With your help, we can all make a difference and change lives!



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for Special Children

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# The Valley

While we were busy navigating Cooper's doctor and therapy appointments, I found out I was pregnant with our second child. It was a happy but stressful time; however, I had no idea of the valley that lie ahead. On June 1, my husband Brad, died unexpectedly.

As I dealt with the loss of my husband and being a single mom, Cooper was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Being told that your child has autism is devastating, and I knew that Cooper would need lots of help to overcome the challenges he faced. Having grown up in the Greenville area, I knew that the Meyer Center for Special Children offered the intensive services that Cooper would need to thrive and reach his fullest potential.

After being on the waiting list for over 6 months, we finally got the call that there was a spot open for Cooper. That first year was exceedingly difficult. Cooper cried every day, as the transition to school was almost impossible for him to process. The hardest part of that school year was that he could not communicate. It was a total guessing game for me but his teachers and therapists began to work their magic. They worked to create a structured and predictable daily routine. In this safe place, they implemented simple communication strategies using choices to answer daily needs and wants: yes or no; more or all done; in or out. Each year he has started to open up and show that he understands the world around him.



# Moving Mountains

This year is Cooper's 4<sup>th</sup> year at the Meyer Center. I am completely overwhelmed at his progress. He is now able to follow simple commands, he can put on his shoes with minimal help, and he can dress himself. At the age of 5, my son told me NO! for the first time and he also gives me some of the sweetest kisses I could ever dream of. He traces the letters of his name and takes pride in the challenges that he can overcome.

The mountains this child has moved in his short time at the Meyer Center are directly related to the education, attention and love he receives from every staff member. Words cannot express how thankful we are to be a part of a mission that empowers children with disabilities, like Cooper, to overcome the obstacles they face and reach their maximum potential.

Thank you for supporting children in our community who strive daily to do the things that we never thought were possible. Without you, my son Cooper and our family, would not have had the doors opened that give us hope for a better future. For that we are eternally grateful. I look forward to the future and seeing all that he will be able to accomplish because of caring people like you.

With gratitude,

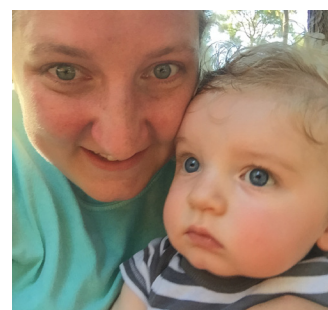
*Carrie*

# Cooper's Story

My name is Carrie Chambers. Also known as Cooper's mom. As all moms are, I was so excited to meet my first-born child. I would imagine snuggling with him, rocking him for hours and all the firsts we would experience together. On November 24, 2015, my husband and I were blessed with a 7lb, 6oz baby boy.

At Cooper's 9-month well check appointment, I noticed I was checking "no" to a lot of questions about Cooper's milestones. He was falling behind in his social-emotional and fine motor skills. He was not babbling like other babies his age and he appeared to be staring off into space. He would not point to things or respond to his name. He seemed to be living in his own little world.

As time passed it became clear we were facing some really big challenges. In March 2017, when Cooper was 15 months old, we were sent for hearing and speech evaluations. The hearing test came back normal, but due to the speech results he started receiving speech and occupational therapy. At this point Cooper was still non-verbal, he still did not play with toys the way other children do, he engaged in repetitive behaviors and he was unable to eat solid food without gagging and spitting up.



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