

LIVE UNITED™

United Way
Metro Chicago



NINETY PERCENT OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OCCURS DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF LIFE AND, NOT SURPRISINGLY, HEARING IS CRITICAL TO THAT PROCESS. KIDS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS ARE AT TREMENDOUS RISK OF DELAYED OR EVEN PERMANENTLY COMPROMISED SPEAKING SKILLS AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT. BUT WITH EARLY PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION THEY CAN AND DO GO ON TO LEAD NORMAL, HAPPY LIVES.

Meet Brett.

When Brett was just two months old, his parents received some devastating news at a routine check up with their pediatrician. Brett had severe hearing loss—and it was permanent.

“We were devastated by the news,” said his mother Maureen. “My husband and I left the doctor’s office, sat in our car and just cried.”

It had been a normal pregnancy and there was no history of deafness or hearing loss on either side of the family, so Brett’s parents were completely blind-sided. They had no idea where to turn or whether they could even afford the expensive hearing devices and services he would need for the rest of his life.

Then they found Sertoma Speech and Hearing Center, a United Way funded agency that provides assessments, treatment, assistive communicative devices, and educational services to children and adults with speech and/or hearing problems—regardless of income. The Center not only educated Brett’s parents about his condition, but provided the hearing aids and devices he needs to lead a normal life.

“He has an FM system at school and the teacher has a microphone,” said his father Todd, describing one of the special hearing aids the Center provided. “It’s like she’s actually talking directly to Brett.”

This small device (that Brett’s parents may never have known about much less been able to afford) has enabled Brett to hear everything his teacher says and be mainstreamed in school. And with ongoing support from Sertoma, Brett will no doubt continue to thrive in the years ahead.

“We just want to thank United Way and everyone involved that’s helped our son,” said Todd.