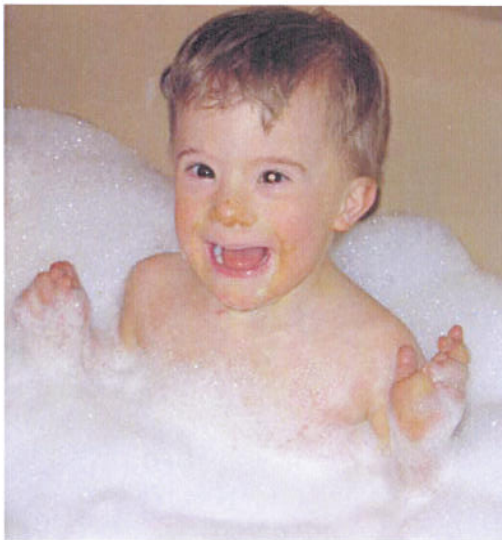




Sean Joseph Barsa

All about me . . .

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce our son, Sean. We hope to give you some background information in order to assist you in his evaluation process. Sean Joseph Barsa is now 2½ years old, healthy and full of life. He plays, laughs and loves to take rides in the car. He is learning sign language and with help will soon learn to crawl, walk, talk, and feed himself. Sean quickly touches the hearts of whomever he meets. As parents, we want to do our part to make sure he is given every opportunity to reach his full potential. We look forward to working together with you as we begin the next step toward building a successful educational foundation for him.



Family Life

Sean lives at home with his parents, Peggy and Chris Barsa, big brother Jack (4½), and little sister Mary Katherine (7 months). Sean enjoys a warm and loving relationship, most of the time, with his siblings. His favorite thing to do is to wrestle with his daddy and big brother Jack. Sean seeks out his sister's pacifier when she is crying, and tries to place it in her mouth to comfort her. He also enjoys crawling upon a cozy lap to read a book or hear a song. If he does not particularly care for the song, he will sign "music" until he hears a song he likes.



Medical History

Sean was born on January 10, 2005 at Valley Hospital. He weighed six pounds three ounces and was 18 inches long. He had a ten-day visit in the neonatal intensive care unit due to breathing difficulties and elevated bilirubin levels before his discharge.



At age 1½, Sean underwent a root canal surgery to correct an exposed root in one of his front teeth. He was orally defensive before the surgery and continues to be to this day. Sean is also missing his two bottom front teeth and therapists believe this contributes to Sean's ongoing feeding issues as well as speech delays. Flanders Pediatric Associates monitor Sean's dental health.

Sean has had tympanostomy tubes surgically implanted in his ears twice to prevent ear infections. Dr. Joel Levitt monitors the status of the tubes and his hearing every four months.

Sean is under the care of Dr. Ellen Oppenheimer to monitor his thyroid. He takes 44 mg daily of levoxyl, and the doctor tests his blood levels every two months. His pediatrician, Dr. Alan Lubin, monitors Sean's total health. Dr. Lubin follows the medical guidelines suggested for children with Down syndrome. Sean visits Dr. Fred Hirshenfang, Director of the Judy Center for Down Syndrome at Hackensack University Medical Center, for an annual consultation.

Sensory Issues

Sean has a difficult time with loud, unfamiliar sounds as well as large crowds. Haircuts and nail clipping are equally upsetting for him. One strategy that has helped Sean is a body-brushing program followed by joint compressions. We do this 3 to 4 times a day and it really helps him. Sean also wears a benik – an external orthotic that he wears on the trunk area for proprioceptive input. It helps him know where he is in space and helps him with body awareness and organization. It is like wearing a great big hug!

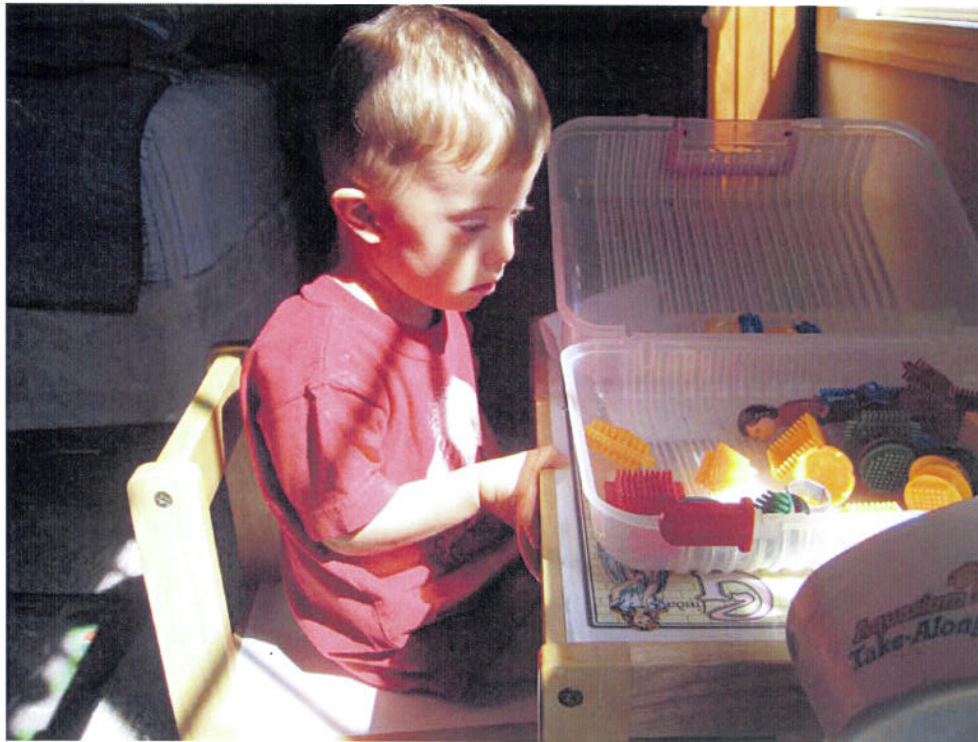
Learning Experiences and Therapies

Sean possesses a natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. He perseveres and does not quit easily. When he becomes frustrated, we encourage him to keep trying and we help him learn to achieve success. Sean is very proud of his accomplishments and claps for every single one of those accomplishments. He spends much of his day clapping and if you happen to miss the accomplishment or its applause, he will elicit your attention to perform an instant replay.

Sean started to receive early intervention services from the state when he was six weeks old. He began with physical therapy and over time, we increased his services to include speech therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental instruction. Recently, we discontinued home-based therapies due to the significant parental cost share increase.

Sean participates in Stepping Stones early intervention program in Livingston. He has attended Stepping Stones since he was 18 months old. Stepping Stones, sponsored by The ARC of Essex County, provides early intervention, preschool and primary grade education primarily to children with Down syndrome. At Stepping Stones, Sean benefits from small group therapy sessions two hours twice a week. Speech therapy sessions focus on oral motor development and therapeutic feeding activities as well as expressive and receptive language

activities. Physical therapy, occupational therapy, and sensory sessions provide Sean the opportunity to engage in individual and facilitated play activities in a one therapist to one or two child format.



Physical Therapy

Like many children with Down syndrome, Sean has low muscle tone and joint laxity. He has significant gross motor delays, but continues to work very hard. We continue to try to teach Sean to crawl on his hands and knees. He is mobile by bear crawling, but we are actively trying to discourage it. Sean holds himself up and sidesteps along the furniture and tables.

Occupational Therapy

Sean's fine motor skills are emerging. He can pick up and place objects inside a bucket, box, or laundry basket. Sean can push the buttons or manipulate the objects on his cause and effect musical toys. He can remove puzzle pieces, but does not put them back in place. Sean likes to turn the pages in his board books. He will also backhand throw anything he gets his hands on. He can identify many body parts by pointing or touching them. Sean has not yet developed a pincer grasp and, therefore, cannot feed himself independently.

Speech Therapy

Sean exhibits significant oral defensiveness and his diet is limited to certain soft foods. At this point in time, he is unable to feed himself independently, but can bring spoon to his mouth with hand over hand assistance. Sean does not use a proper up and down with side-to-side motion to chew his food. He will mostly gulp his food down. One of the things we do to help him to develop chewing skills is the use of a "chewy tube" which works the chewing muscles. Sean drinks from a straw cup with assistance. Sign language has been a critical component of Sean's speech and language development. Sean communicates solely with signing and he has a vocabulary of 15 words.

In Closing . . .

We have high aspirations for all of our children. Those aspirations are not less or more for each individual child, just unique. Down syndrome may make Sean part of an exceptional community, but it is not the trait that will define him. It is his personality and loving nature – his character as a whole that will continue to define him. Sean is a wonderful boy who has a bright future ahead of him. We want to make sure Sean is given every opportunity to make the most of his life.

