

Hope for every child, every family.™

# THE AUTISM BEACON



LIGHTHOUSE AUTISM CENTER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3 | SUMMER 2015

## PLYMOUTH IS HOME TO OUR FOURTH LIGHTHOUSE CENTER

Starting in August, Lighthouse will begin to offer therapy services to Plymouth and the surrounding communities. The center will be located in Plymouth and will be home to our newest – and fourth – Lighthouse Autism Center. With this location, we'll be able to provide much-needed ABA therapy to families in those communities.



“Several of our families who are enrolled at our Mishawaka and Warsaw locations are actually from the Plymouth area.

Some of these parents are willing to drive over an hour back and forth everyday to get their kids the therapy they need because there are no other options in their communities,” said Gregg Maggioli, Executive Director.

Realizing there was a growing need, Lighthouse organized a community interest meeting to gauge the need for autism therapy services in Plymouth and the surrounding areas.

“The turnout from families, local schools, doctors, and advocates was outstanding and largely solidified our decision to open a center there. With the support of the community and the need for the ABA therapy services we provide, there was no question that opening a center in Plymouth was the next step for Lighthouse,” said Gregg.

The new center will initially have 12 children and a staff of 16 and we expect to grow to 18 children and a 30-person staff.

Opening a center in Plymouth will have a positive effect on the availability of services in Northern Indiana. Once the new center opens, Gregg noted that the Plymouth-area families enrolled at the Mishawaka and Warsaw locations will be transferring to the Plymouth location. This will in turn free spots at our Mishawaka and Warsaw locations to serve more families in those areas.

Families now have more options than ever before for providers of autism treatment. Amongst these providers, Lighthouse has emerged as a leader in autism therapy in Northern Indiana. “Through the opening of our center in Plymouth, it is our hope to continue our mission of bringing quality, center-based therapy to communities who are in need of ABA services,” said Gregg.



For information on many of the available resources, as well as upcoming events, please visit our website at [LighthouseAutismCenter.com](http://LighthouseAutismCenter.com)

## Our Spots

### Mishawaka – Edison Center

3730 Edison Lakes Parkway  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545

### Mishawaka – Park Place Center

525 Park Place Circle  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545

### Plymouth Center

1550 Pidco Drive  
Plymouth, IN 46563

### Warsaw Center

1535 Provident Drive  
Warsaw, Indiana 46580



Call: (574) 387-4313

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# The Heart of the Matter



## A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At Lighthouse Autism Center, we strive to provide quality ABA treatment for all those who are in need. By placing our focus on each child and their parents, we do everything we can to make a positive difference in their lives.

Yet, even with a dedicated, highly trained, and committed team of clinicians, there are some families who need assistance beyond Lighthouse. They may be too old, may not need ABA therapy, or Lighthouse may not be a good fit for them. No matter the reason, they still need assistance in other ways, and providing needed assistance is what we're all about.

That's why we started the Lighthouse Families First Foundation (LHFFF) earlier this year. A nonprofit organization, the LHFFF helps special needs children, adults, and their families outside of Lighthouse's capabilities. And we're already off to a successful start.

In honor of Autism Awareness Month in April, we held a variety of activities aimed at raising funds for autism care, along with overall awareness of autism. The events included hosting a dinner and dance, and we set a month-long goal of raising \$20,000 to benefit LHFFF. However, thanks to the heartwarming generosity of the Michiana community, we far exceeded our goal and raised over \$30,000!

LHFFF gives 100 percent of that money in various ways to the families we assist. For instance, we might provide an iPad with communication software for a nonverbal child, or a scholarship so a child can receive therapy. We even supply gas cards for families who can't afford to get their child to and from therapy and medical appointments.

By donating to the Lighthouse Families First Foundation, you can make a tangible difference in the life of a special needs child or adult and their family. Because as our mission states, we believe in hope for every child and every family. We're putting that belief into action with Lighthouse, and now with Lighthouse Families First Foundation. Thank you so much for your continued, kindhearted support!

Sincerely,

Gregg Maggioli  
Executive Director

# New Hubs Established for Early Diagnosis of Autism

The earlier a child is diagnosed with autism or developmental delays, the sooner intervention services can start. It's during this time of rapid brain growth and plasticity that it can help a child the most.

To increase the number of area children who would benefit from early intervention, the Indiana University School of Medicine formed a partnership with Riley Children's Foundation. Together, they opened Early Evaluation services for autism spectrum disorder and developmental delay at six Indiana locations in South Bend, Lafayette, Bloomington, New Albany, Evansville, and Fort Wayne.

Additional sites are planned for later this year.

The services they provide are part of the Neurodevelopmental and Behavioral System (NDBS), a model developed by faculty at the IU School of Medicine. This offers a solution to the need for high-quality health care for children in Indiana with neurodevelopmental and behavioral disorders.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about one in 68 children are diagnosed with autism in the United States – an overall increase of 30 percent from 2012. In Indiana, the average age of diagnosis is 5.3 years, but early screening with referral for evaluation and diagnosis can occur by age 18 months.

To meet this growing need, diagnostic services are now available for children who have been identified in early screenings as having concerns for developmental delay or autism. The criteria for evaluation appointments are:

- Child must be 18-42 months of age
- Child must have a primary care physician
- Primary physician must identify concern based on standardized screening tools (often ASQ and/or MCHAT)

For more information or to make an evaluation appointment, contact your nearest location:

**Beacon Medical Group  
Centennial Neighborhood  
Health Center**  
South Bend, IN  
574.647.2500

**Deaconess Riley Children's  
Specialty Center**  
Newburgh, IN (Near Evansville)  
812.858.3143

**IU Health Arnett – Lafayette**  
Lafayette, IN  
Internal health system  
referrals only

**IU Health Riley Physicians –  
Bloomington**  
Bloomington, IN  
812.353.3740

**Nassim McMonigle &  
Mescia PC**  
New Albany, IN  
812.949.0405

**Parkview Health  
Parkview Children's Clinic**  
Fort Wayne, IN  
260.266.5400

# Staff Spotlight

PAIGE WRIGHT, ABA THERAPIST



Paige Wright's desire to pay it forward led her to become an ABA Therapist at Lighthouse Autism Center.

Her brother suffered a traumatic brain injury 15 years ago when he was just eight years old. He's fine today, but attending his speech therapy sessions over the years helped her decide on a career path that would put her in the medical field.

"I wanted to help people like my brother, so I went to school for Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences at Purdue University," she said.

After school, she found work as a Certified Nursing Assistant. But, she also felt a calling to do more. A friend mentioned her degree was beneficial in the ABA field, and her job search led her to Lighthouse. "I just knew Lighthouse was where I should be," said Paige.

Today, she finds much to enjoy and appreciate about working at Lighthouse. "I love the people and the friendships I've made with so many of my coworkers. It's also rewarding that management takes the time to schedule events for all of the staff. I've never been treated so well as an employee until I started here."

Yet, what touches her most about her Lighthouse experience is what she affectionately calls "the kiddos," and to see the changes they're making.

"I've had so many laughs, and even the occasional tear of happiness with each of the kiddos I've worked with. It not only makes me a better therapist, but an all-around better person," Paige said. "They are some of the most incredible kids I've ever met and they teach me something new every day."

# Shining Examples

Communicating with others is an ability most people take for granted. For those with autism and their families, it's a different story. And in the case of Garrett, that story is a happy one.



"The biggest change I've seen in Garrett since he started at Lighthouse has definitely been his communication skills," said his mom, Meghan. "He's able to initiate and carry on conversations now, order his own food at restaurants, and occasionally even strike up a conversation with someone besides immediate family members."

Considering his future plans, talking should serve him well. "Right now he wants to grow up to be a teacher. He spends time teaching me things, teaching his brother things, and even teaching his teachers things!" said Meghan.

Here are just a few of Garrett's achievements since first coming to Lighthouse in July 2014:

**Life skills:** Garrett's gone from pull-ups and not urinating on the potty independently to wearing big-boy underwear, asking to use the bathroom, and using a pass to go all by himself!

**Social skills:** Initially, Garrett wouldn't even make eye contact with his peers. Now he can play five different board games with them, and can ask and answer a variety of questions with his friends!

**Writing skills:** At first, he couldn't hold a pencil correctly or barely scribble on paper. Today, he's writing math problems and spelling words!

As Garrett heads off to kindergarten this fall, Meghan is proud of how far he's come. "He has excelled in so many ways. Sending Garrett to Lighthouse was probably the best decision we ever made."

## Clinical Corner

### Autism Could Be Caused by Genetic Mutations in Over 100 Genes, According to New Research

Tech & Science News, Published by *Newsweek*  
By Paula Mejia

Although genetics have long been thought to influence autism, researchers have struggled to concretely link individual genes with the condition, as many children who develop it have parents who did not.

Now, two landmark studies recently published in *Nature* reported researchers working together in over 50 laboratories across the globe discovered dozens of sets of genes (and genetic mutations) that are closely connected to – and may even be able to form the basis of new treatments for – the development of autism.

The new research claims 60 of the approximately 100 recently identified genes are within a "high-confidence" threshold – meaning that mutations in those genes are 90 percent likely to be tied to autism risk. Previously, only nine genes had been linked to autism with high confidence, according to a 2013 study published in *Cell*.

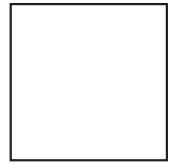
Researchers working on both studies attribute part of their success to the fact they were able to read the "letters" in DNA code at much higher speeds than predecessors, thanks to advances in next-generation sequencing. They said the newfound development of global initiatives is also allowing scientists worldwide to work more closely on pioneering autism-related research.



To read the full article:  
[www.newsweek.com/autism-could-be-caused-genetic-mutations-over-100-genes-according-new-research-281001](http://www.newsweek.com/autism-could-be-caused-genetic-mutations-over-100-genes-according-new-research-281001)



3730 Edison Lakes Parkway  
Mishawaka, IN 46545



Learn more about us at  
[LighthouseAutismCenter.com](http://LighthouseAutismCenter.com)

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Address Line 2  
Address Line 1  
Anytown, US 12345-6789]



# Brilliant Benchmarks

An important aspect of ABA therapy at Lighthouse is that it allows us to customize a program for each child. By providing structured learning opportunities, it becomes more effective in helping develop new skills and refining previously learned skills, producing positive achievements. Take a look at how well some of our children have done:



### Mikiah:

- Went from making 0 sounds per day in November 2014 to averaging 640 spontaneous sounds per day in February 2015
- Stopped communicating what she wanted by grabbing items and now asks for 35 different items with her communication book
- Can sit on the potty for up to 5 minutes and urinate in it up to 8 times daily after initially not being able to do either



### Sammy:

- Went from wearing a pull-up to being potty trained
- Can now wait for up to 10 minutes for highly preferred things
- Now tolerates non-preferred things, including Chapstick, wearing gloves, and having a change in plans; working on non-preferred foods and headphones
- Gained academic skills such as identifying upper- and lower-case letters, and letter sounds; working on copying and writing letters



### Kevin:

- Went from using a supportive device and sitting down to use the bathroom to standing up and going to the bathroom independently without a supportive device
- Now uses his iPad to ask independently for things he wants after being unable to do so when he started at Lighthouse
- Once drank and ate too quickly without swallowing – he now swallows after every bite of food and every drink of water

### A note from Sammy's Speech Therapist:

"We referred Sam to Lighthouse because we knew that if he could engage in a structured and consistent environment, he would be able to demonstrate to us all that he knows. Sam wants to learn, and Lighthouse has understood how to set him up for success so he not only can learn, but thrive. When I saw him at Lighthouse, he was all smiles, pleased with his work and ready for more. Lighthouse was the right fit for him and we are truly grateful for all the quality one-on-one attention that the staff has been able to grant him."

Christy Bartek, CCC-SLP

