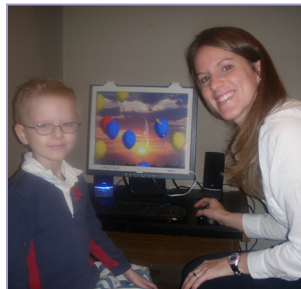




Lekotek Welcomes New Staff Member, Hannah Nabors

Lekotek is delighted to welcome Hannah Nabors as Lekotek leader at the Gainesville satellite location. Hannah earned a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Development from the University of Georgia. Thereafter, she completed the Child Life Specialist program at Georgia Health Sciences University (formally the Medical College of Georgia). Hannah also holds certification in the state of Georgia as a Nursing Assistant. Before joining the Lekotek staff, Hannah initiated the Child Life program at Dream House for Medically Fragile Children. She has been a volunteer for Make-A-Wish Children's Foundation, the Starlight-Starbright Children's Foundation and Camp Twin Lakes.

Hannah and her husband Josh live in Jefferson, GA, where Josh is the P.E. teacher at Jefferson Academy. When not at Lekotek, Hannah enjoys reading, spending time with family, and running. Hannah has completed 2 full marathons and 3 half-marathons with plans for a 4th in the spring of 2012.



In addition to skills in special education, adapted toy use and technology, Hannah brings enthusiasm, dedication and a passion for Lekotek. In just nine months, the new site has helped 28 children and their families. We welcome Hannah and thank all of our staff members for their talent and commitment.

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"Like Me" by Emily Perl Kingsley

I went to my dad and said to him,
There's a new kid who's come to my school.
He's different from me and he isn't too cool.
No, he's nothing at all like me, like me
No, he's nothing at all like me.

He runs in a funnyish jerkyish way
And he never comes first in a race
Sometimes he forgets which way is first base,
And he's nothing at all like me, like me
No, he's nothing at all like me.

He studies all day in a separate class
And they say that it's called "special ed."
And sometimes I don't understand what he's said
And he's nothing at all like me, like me
No, he's nothing at all like me.

His face looks kind of different from mine,
And his talking is sometimes so slow
And it makes me feel funny and
there's one thing I know
He is nothing at all like me, like me
No, he's nothing at all like me!

And my father said, "Son, I want you to think
When you meet someone different and new
That he may seem a little bit strange, it's true,
But he's not very different from you, from you,
No, he's not very different from you."

Well I guess, I admitted, I've looked at his face;
When he's left out of games, he feels bad.
And when other kids tease him,
I can see he's so sad.

I guess that's not so different from me, from me,
No, that's not very different from me.

And when we're in music, he sure loves to sing,
And he sings just like me, right out loud.
When he gets his report card,
I can tell he feels proud,
And that's not very different from me, from me,
No, that's not very different from me.

And I know in the lunchroom he has lots of fun;
He loves hot dogs and ice cream and fries.
And he hates to eat spinach and
that's not a surprise,
'Cause that's not very different from me, from me,
No, that's not very different from me.

And he's always so friendly, he always says hi,
And he waves and he calls out my name.
And he'd like to be friends and get into a game,
Which is not very different from me, from me,
No, I guess that's not different from me.

And his folks really love him, I saw them at school,
I remember on Open School Night –
They were smiling and proud and
they hugged him real tight
And that's not very different from me, from me,
No, that's not very different from me.

So I said to my dad, Hey, you know that new kid?
Well, I've really been thinking a lot.
Some things are different...and some things are not...
But mostly he's really like me, like me,
Yes, my new friend's...alot...like me.

Hippotherapy and its Benefits for Children with Special Needs

Lekotek's new Gainesville satellite is located at Walker Therapy. Walker is well respected for providing indoor hippotherapy. Derived from the Greek word, hippos, "hippotherapy" literally refers to therapy aided by a horse. The concept of hippotherapy is recorded in the ancient Greek writings of Hippocrates. However, hippotherapy as a formalized discipline was not implemented until the 1960s when it was used in Germany, Austria and Switzerland as an adjunct to traditional physical therapy. The discipline was formalized in the United States in 1992, with the formation of the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA).

Physical, occupational and speech therapists utilize equine movement to achieve functional outcomes. As the horse moves, the rider's muscles instinctively respond to the constantly changing need to maintain balance. Hippotherapy is fun, exciting and motivational. It expands freedom of movement while promoting muscular strength and endurance. Occupational therapists use hippotherapy to develop fine motor skills, attention and sensory processing. And speech therapists address communication goals asking the rider to follow simple or multi-step directions. In addition, they ask the child to give the horse commands such as "go" or "whoa" using words, sign language or pointing to pictures.

When one observes a child with special needs grinning, ear to ear, while riding and shouting "look at me" there is no doubt that hippotherapy enhances self-esteem. Research from the American Hippo-

therapy Association indicates that hippotherapy improves muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, motor development and emotional well being. Hippotherapy may benefit children with neurological disorders, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism and sensory integration dysfunction. It is important that each child be carefully evaluated to rule out any potential contraindications for therapy before engaging in hippotherapy.

Meet Kyle Pease Lekotek Graduate and Triathlon Athlete

Now 26, Kyle has fond memories of playing at Lekotek. As a little boy, he enjoyed toys and games with his twin brother, Evan, and older brother, Brett. But computer activities were always his favorite. The older apple 2s had synthesized speech and despite the many ways we would type, Kyle's name, the voice output insisted on calling Kyle, "Kayak". And so Lekotek leader, Helene, affectionately nicknamed Kyle, "Kayak". Perhaps the computer knew that Kyle would be needing a kayak to complete his recent undertaking of competing in triathlons. Kyle was born with cerebral palsy and as a result has decreased sensation and mobility in his arms and legs. He uses a wheelchair and requires assistance for daily living activities. But nothing has deterred him from earning a college degree, being a motivational speaker and holding jobs at both Publix and Piedmont Hospital.

One night after his brother, Brett, had completed an Ironman (a triathlon that encompasses a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike and 26.2 mile run), Kyle asked, "Can I do one?" Ever since Kyle asked the question,

the three brothers have been competing together in triathlons as a team. Kyle and Brett are currently training for the Atlanta Publix half marathon. Brett knows firsthand that a healthy person endures a lot over the course of a day to complete an Ironman. Yet, he believes Kyle goes through greater challenges every single day. Kyle has established the Kyle Pease Foundation whose purpose is to improve the lives of individuals with physical challenges. Kyle has changed lives and adds to the lives of those lucky enough to know him.

Family Profile: Meet the Brown Family

Marissa, age 8, and Griffin, age 4, are what you would expect of kids their ages – adventurous, fun loving, playful, lovers of reading/being read to and, fortunately, adoring of each other. What was unexpected was Griffin's diagnosis of Down syndrome at birth. Griffin's parents, James and Lisa, never stopped to ask why, but rather what – what can we do to make our son's life the best it can be? The answer has led to partnerships with seven medical providers, six therapists, many teachers and Lekotek. Though time consuming, James and Lisa are certain that early intervention is making a differ-

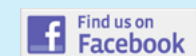


ence and will continue to provide a solid base for Griffin as he grows. As important as Griffin's therapies are, James and Lisa make sure there is time to help Griffin enjoy each day. Right now, Griffin can't get enough of Shaun the Sheep, being read to and playing with Marissa.

"Marissa is a great big sister, very thoughtful and loving, yet appropriately firm with Griffin when she needs to be," says Lisa. When we can't get Griffin to do what we want or need, we call on Marissa to take the lead!" Lisa says with a laugh. "Lekotek has been great in helping Marissa understand what it means for her brother, and others, to have a special need," says James. We count on Lekotek to be an enjoyable constant in our busy and ever-changing world of doctor and therapy appointments, educational meetings and, right now, potty training."

James, a stay-at-home Dad and Kung Fu instructor, and Lisa, a senior director of communications at Emory, don't downplay that life with a child who has special needs has some tough moments. But seeing the smiles on their children's faces keeps them motivated and strong. Lisa says, "It's important to remain positive, determined and hopeful. In addition, surrounding ourselves with professionals who truly partner with us to make the best decisions for Griffin, and ultimately our family, gives us strength. Being a part of wonderful programs like Lekotek is invaluable. Lekotek is helping our kids develop self-esteem and us meet other families - both part of fostering a community in which we all feel less isolated. Together we will create caring communities in which our children and others will be welcome for generations to come."

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