

How one child can change the future of a family

"The doctors told us Kurt was nothing short of a miracle."



Because of their family's experience with Parents as Teachers, Maria Callahan, shown here with Kurt in 2003, has become one of Parents as Teachers' best volunteers in Davidson County, North Carolina.

missed a PAT visit in five years. Maria was very receptive to learning all along. She wanted all the developmental information she could get. She told me, "We didn't do good in school, but we want Kurt to do good."

Kurt Callahan was born on December 29, 1996, to Craig and Maria Callahan. He was their third son, but the first they had been able to bring home from the hospital as a newborn. Their first two sons had cerebral palsy and other medical issues, and doctors had warned the Callahans that chances were high that their third child would be disabled as well.

Fast forward seventeen years. Kurt Callahan is an honors student at Davidson Early College High School in Lexington, North Carolina. When he graduates he'll receive not only his high school diploma, but also an associate's degree.

The Callahans credit Parents as Teachers and their parent educator, Bleasha Carroll, with much of Kurt's success. "To say the least, we were a little scared when we brought him home from the hospital. The doctors told us that Kurt was nothing short of a miracle."

But it took Parents as Teachers' developmental screenings to make them believe that. "It was great to know after testing through Parents as Teachers that Kurt had no problems, that he was going to do great and that he was going to thrive," recalls Maria. "We needed to hear that, and we needed Bleasha to calm us and tell us we were doing the right things."

Bleasha Carroll, currently the supervisor of the Davidson County Parents as Teachers program, was the Callahans' parent educator and was referred to the family when Kurt was just two months old. "They never



The Callahan family never missed a Parents as Teachers home visit,

Maria and Craig both have learning disabilities and neither graduated from high school. "Once we knew Kurt was going to be fine, then we were worried more about if we as parents were doing things right," Maria explains. "With our learning disabilities, we can only do so much. It helped us to know we were on track. Anytime Bleasha would come, she would bring a basket with toys, books and little activities. Kurt always was watching for her. The information was not hard to understand and the activities were easy to do."

including this one with parent educator Bleasha Callahan in 1999 when Kurt was three years old.

"I told Maria, 'You don't have to be able to read well, just talk to Kurt about the pictures,'" Bleasha says. "He was a very bright child. And they wanted the best for him. They did everything by the book."



Kurt Callahan, 17, will graduate with honors and an associate's degree when he finishes high school in Davidson County, North Carolina.