

The Lehrke Family Story

Help Me Grow Carver County provides information about child development and availability of special services for eligible children ages Birth to Kindergarten. This program has been serving Carver County families for 20 years, previously known as First Step.

Erin and Marnie Lehrke of Norwood Young America and their children Hannah and Abigail became connected with First Step/Help Me Grow after Hannah was diagnosed with non-communicating hydrocephalus around two months of age. It was found after Hannah had an MRI to diagnose the size of a hemangioma growing under her eyelid. While Hannah was recovering at home from two brain surgeries and the insertion of a VP shunt, First Step/Help Me Grow contacted the Lehrke family and explained that Hannah's medical status qualified her for early intervention services.

"I was a first time mom and had been through a very scary experience and saw this as an opportunity to help my daughter. We had an intake meeting and met everyone involved in Hannah's care. Physical and occupational therapists, as well as an early childhood development teacher began to have regular visits at home and later at daycare. She has since 'graduated' from the program. I like to say with honors", said Erin Lehrke.

Abigail, Hannah's younger sister became involved in early intervention after she scored low in communication skills on the Follow Along program questionnaire. (Follow Along is a free program through Carver County Public Health, for families to learn about their child's health and development) She was doing very little talking and set up with audiological testing and a speech therapist to work with her regularly. Abigail is now talking much more and enjoying it.

Marnie Lehrke states, " Looking back, Help Me Grow and early intervention has been a huge part of our children's development, guiding us through many childhood obstacles and challenges. Their care is obvious and we appreciate everything they have done for our family. From an infant struggling to see herself in a mirror, to a rambunctious preschooler, they provided valuable tips and information for our family to use".

"As a parent you want to do everything to help your children. If you think your child is struggling, trust your instincts. Make the call! There is not shame is getting help for your child. The program not only helped Hannah and Abigail , it helped us too. We have a say in their development and are doing what we can to put them in a position to succeed," states Marnie Lehrke.

For more information, visit www.MNParentsKnow.info. If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, you can call Help Me Grow Carver County at 952-368-0160. Statewide, you can call 1-866-693-4769. Families interested in enrolling their child in the Follow Along program can call 952-361-1329.

