



## Fall 2017 Newsletter



### Weston's Story

On the day of his birth, our son, Weston, suffered a massive ischemic stroke that destroyed nearly the entire left hemisphere of his brain. The doctors grimly sat us down and explained that our baby would likely have Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, and a long list of related diagnoses. They predicted that our precious boy would struggle with everything and perhaps never accomplish skills like talking or walking. We were devastated. We loved our son and wanted to give him the best possible chances of a quality, fulfilling life, but we didn't even know where to start.

Within weeks of coming home from the hospital, our family received a visit from DDRRC. They were a beacon of hope in an overwhelming ocean of the unknown. Our service coordinator quickly arranged for Weston to begin physical therapy, as well as vision therapy, since it was clear that he was having vision difficulties. The therapists came, and we set to work creating manageable short-term goals, as well as a variety of coordinating strategies, to help Weston begin to navigate his world. Our grief over the loss of our son's "typical" childhood soon made way for hope that our "new normal" could be just as beautiful.

Slowly, our boy began to make progress. Although he has very little use of his right side, his incredible therapists were able to teach him to roll over, to bear weight on his affected arm, and to sit up. In spite of his lack of a right visual field, he learned how to track and play with toys. By the time Weston was a year old, DDRRC generously agreed to add occupational and speech therapies, to further address his developing needs. Soon after, we began to hear a few modified words and Weston began to tolerate solid foods.

At two and a half, our sweet, happy toddler now can use functional vocabulary, climb the stairs, and take a few independent steps. He plays with his brother and sisters. He feeds himself with minimal assistance. All of these skills were patiently, intentionally taught by Weston's team of knowledgeable DDRRC therapists, who took the time to prepare appropriately modified activities that allowed our son to experience success in the little things as he moved toward long-term goals. Their dedication to teaching parents allowed me to follow through with their suggestions all week long, exponentially increasing Weston's progress through repetition.

People often look at Weston's MRIs and tell me that his developmental progress is a miracle, and I believe that. However, the truth is that from the beginning, Weston's miracle came in the form of hard work, dedication, and successful teamwork. Weston has a long road ahead of him, and living with Cerebral Palsy is an upward climb, but the foundation provided by DDRRC has set our son on the path to success, and we couldn't be more grateful.

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## Meet Our Newest EI Team Members



**Lindsay Bollwahn**  
Social Emotional  
Provider

“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.” Thich Nhat Hanh

Lindsay Bollwahn has her Masters in Counseling with over 20 years of experience working with children and over 16 with children from the age of birth to three. Currently, she specializes in providing play-based in-home services to children and their families with a focus on behavioral, sensory, communication, social-emotional and general development needs.

Lindsay earned her Bachelors in Psychology and her Masters in Counseling. She worked for 15+ years as a Service Coordinator in New Mexico and Colorado, where she supported families through the Early Intervention program and guided them towards self-advocacy and empowerment. She is committed to helping families make their lives easier and is excited to be working with families in a new capacity.

In her free time she is spending time with family and friends, enjoying live music in Colorado, practicing mindfulness, yoga, and running.

## Meet Our Newest EI Team Members



**Jillie Jennings**  
Speech-Language  
Pathologist



Jillie is a speech-language pathologist, and she is so excited to be a part of the DDRC early intervention team! She graduated from Willamette University with her Bachelor's degree in Spanish and has lived in Granada, Spain and Quito, Ecuador practicing her bilingual skills. She graduated with her Master's degree from Portland State University in Speech and Hearing Sciences with a bilingual certification.

Jillie is passionate about the field of communication and believes that everyone deserves to have their voice heard through whatever method works best for them. She enjoys working with families to help find motivating and natural ways for children to communicate. Jillie recently completed a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) fellowship at JFK Partners through the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She was a part of the ENRICH early intervention team, the Rise School of Denver, and the Developmental Pediatrics Autism and Developmental Disabilities evaluation team at Children's Hospital. Jillie also participated in extra training and classes throughout the year and advocated for people with diverse abilities both at the Colorado State Capital and at the Capital in Washington D.C.

She lived in Oregon for 8 years while attending school and has a special place in her heart for the Pacific Northwest. However, she is a native Coloradan and missed the sun, the mountains, and her family, and is glad to be back spending time with all of them! In her free time, Jillie likes to be out in nature (hiking, kayaking), writing songs on her guitar, creating pottery, spending time with her new kitten, or looking for the tastiest restaurants.

# Tips From The EI Team

## *Don't Contain Me!*

*Tiffany Sharpe, PT, DPT, PCS*

Children, both infants and toddlers, need opportunities to move. From a young age, children need to spend time in a variety of positions so they can develop the skills needed to move their bodies and explore their environment. This includes, for many families what feels like a dreaded obligation, “tummy time”.

Why is tummy time so important anyway? The short answer is the position helps babies to develop strength and provides a variety of sensory experiences that teach them about their environment and how to move through it. The concept of tummy time really came along in the 1990's when the Back to Sleep/ Safe to Sleep Program was initiated, urging families to place infants on their backs to reduce the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). Prior to this time, most families didn't even think twice about putting their babies on their tummies because it was the most comfortable position for them. Research shows the Safe to Sleep Program is effective in reducing SIDS risk; however, there has been an alarming rise in the number of children with plagiocephaly (altered head shape) and torticollis (tight neck muscles).



Why would these two things be related? It turns out, more and more infants are spending a lot of their waking hours in baby “containers”. Prolonged pressure on a specific part of the head can perpetuate itself so infants end up with flattening on the back of their head and tightening of the neck muscles. Many parents feel apprehensive about placing their baby on their tummy, because they are anxious that it may be unsafe. In parents' loving attempt to keep their babies engaged, entertained, safe, and happy, they are placing their children in any number of devices they are made to believe can enhance their development. This includes things like bouncy seats, car seats, baby swings, rock n' plays, exersaucers, baby walkers, jumperoo/bouncers... the list is long. Advertising tells us these devices help to stimulate development, build gross motor skills, teach children about their colors, etc. However, I urge you to take a look at what most of these devices really do for children:

1. Put them into positions they are not developmentally ready for (such as sitting in the bumbo seat when they cannot yet sit up on their own (see picture at right), or standing in the exersaucer or walker when they haven't yet mastered how to roll over)
2. Keep them content while they play and mom and dad know that they are safe.
3. Limit their independent mobility, exploration of things around them, and problem-solving skills



Keeping your child safe should not be overlooked. Placing infants on their backs to sleep is still an important recommendation. However, is there a way you can change how you are supporting your infant while keeping them safe and providing opportunities to move when they are awake? One of the most common complaints about tummy time is “my baby hates it, he/she cries every time I put her down.” Let's think about why this might be. As an infant, if you have been consistently sleeping on your back and positioned in devices that strap you in place, you haven't yet learned how to lift your head up from the floor or push yourself up to see what is going on around you. Often, at about 1-2 months,

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families begin to think of putting children on their tummies because they are well-meaning and have read tummy time is good for their child. But if this is really a child's first experience on their tummy and they just get plopped down on the floor and are expected to perform, it is often not what happens. To an infant this could feel frustrating, isolating, and upsetting. Instead, here are 10 other ways you can incorporate a variety of positions, including tummy time, into your day:

1. Carry your child up at your shoulder or on their tummy in your arms as you walk around with them. Try to change arms and hold them on either side of your body so they can alternate which side of their head is getting pressure.
2. Try face-to-face time where your child lies on your chest and you gently recline backwards to a position that is comfortable for you and your child to interact while they are on their tummy.
3. Lie your baby on their tummy on your lap where you can gently bounce and interact with them.
4. Get down on the floor TOGETHER and play with your baby face to face.
5. Use a little blanket rolled under your baby's chest to help support them to lift their head up while you are supervising them on their tummy; or for older infants, try supporting them to prop up at a couch cushion or your leg with their arms while you position toys in front of them
6. Recognize your baby's cues, certain times are going to be better than others, and when your infant is becoming tired or agitated, this is not the time to attempt tummy play
7. Tummy is not the only great position! You can also position your baby on his/her side to play as well as on their back, as these positions also encourage movement and exploration of the environment
8. Limit time "baby containers" like swings, car seats, exersaucers, baby walkers, bumbo chairs, bouncers, jumperoos, and other devices are used. Babies should not spend more than 10-15 minutes at a time in any of these devices, and some of them you are better off foregoing completely.
9. Leave your car seat in the car and carry your child inside. This way, your child will not be at risk of staying in the car seat for long periods when they do not require it for safety.
10. Have fun! During tummy time, use a fun or interesting toy your baby doesn't always get to have at other times when they play. Spend this time talking to your child, interacting, and getting to know your baby. Put the electronics away and focus on just having time to yourselves. It can be an amazing time to connect with your child if you approach it in this way.



**Want to connect with other EI families? Be sure to check out our Early Intervention Facebook page!!!**

<http://www.facebook.com/ddrc-EI>

**LOOKING FOR A GREAT NEW PARENTING BLOG???**



**TiLT Podcast Brings Experts and Parents Together to Support “Differently Wired” Kids**

[www.tiltparenting.com](http://www.tiltparenting.com)



**PEP Is Parents Encouraging Parents!**

The Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) plan conferences throughout the year that are family-centered and designed to offer support, information, and education to parents and professionals. We call these gatherings PEP Conferences!

**2017-2018 Conference Dates and Locations**

- Fall 2017 - October 19-21, 2017 - Breckenridge, CO
- Winter 2018 - February 22-24, 2018 - Colorado Springs, CO
- Spring 2018 - April 26-28, 2018 - Crested Butte, CO

*“I was truly inspired with this conference! The amount of information and resources made available to us was so valuable. I could not be more grateful for the opportunity. My daughter will benefit big time!”*  
– **Parent**

**DID YOU KNOW CHILD  
CARE CENTERS HAVE  
RATINGS???**



## **THE COLORADO SHINES DIFFERENCE**

### **Helping Colorado’s Children Start Early and Start Strong**

From choosing hotels and restaurants, to making online purchases to finding a car repair shop, we use ratings and reviews to make decisions.

Colorado Shines is based on that same principle - offering a professional, credible rating system that allows us to look closely at Colorado’s early learning programs to determine what’s working and what’s not.

Colorado Shines gives parents and caregivers peace of mind as they search for quality child care and preschool programs in Colorado. It offers information including location, hours, licensing status and, most importantly, the Colorado Shines quality rating. By engaging in this free process, families like yours can find the best early learning fit to get your children off to a strong start.

#### How Colorado Shines Works

To determine the level of quality of Colorado’s early learning programs, Colorado Shines evaluates how each organization works to:

- support children’s health and safety
- ensure their early childhood professionals are well-trained and effective
- provide a supportive learning environment that teaches children new skills
- help parents become partners in their child’s learning
- demonstrate strong leadership and business practices

Once a rating has been established, Colorado Shines gives participating early learning programs the tools and support needed to consistently improve their quality. These resources include helping programs develop and implement a quality improvement plan and offering trainings and other opportunities for professional development.

The [Colorado Shines Quality Care Flyer and Worksheet](#) provides additional steps and a checklist of questions and observations to support your search. As you can see, there are many things to consider when choosing a program. That is why Colorado Shines is part of the state’s initiative to focus on these important years.



**COLORADO  
SHINES**

**START EARLY  
START STRONG  
QUALITY EARLY LEARNING**

## STEPS TO FINDING QUALITY CARE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The early years of life are critical to a child's learning and development. Quality early learning programs, like child care and preschool, help children start early and start strong on the path to life-long success.

Colorado Shines and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies work to connect parents and caregivers with quality early learning programs, like child care and preschool, that have a big impact on a child's development.

### **STEP ONE: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS**

Think about the kind of care you need for your child (a center, home-based care, Head Start, etc.). A Child Care Resource and Referral agency can provide information on these options. Call [1-877-338-2273](tel:1-877-338-2273).

### **STEP TWO: SEARCH FOR A QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM**

A Child Care Resource and Referral agency can provide you with a list of available child care programs in your community, or you may search for a program at [ColoradoShines.com](http://ColoradoShines.com).

Both resources can also provide information to determine if you qualify for financial support, like the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.

### **STEP THREE: VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS**

Visit programs in person and speak with the provider or center director. Ask them questions to find out what you can expect from their program. Use the Colorado Shines Child Care Worksheet to determine what questions to ask.

### **STEP FOUR: TAKE A CLOSER LOOK**

When looking for child care programs, it is important to understand what makes each program unique, qualified and successful. Colorado Shines assesses and supports improvement in the quality of all licensed early learning programs.

It is also important to learn about the licensing history of a program. This information is available at [ColoradoOfficeOfEarlyChildhood.com](http://ColoradoOfficeOfEarlyChildhood.com).

### **STEP FIVE: YOUR CHILD IS ENROLLED! WHAT'S NEXT?**

Be part of your child's early learning experience. Play, read, sing and talk with your child. Find more tips at [EarlyLearningCO.org](http://EarlyLearningCO.org).

Communication is important. Talk to your child's teacher often about how your child is doing at home and in care.

FOR YOUR FREE CHILD CARE REFERRAL, CALL [1-877-338-2273](tel:1-877-338-2273).  
SEARCH FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE ONLINE AT [COLORADOSHINES.COM](http://COLORADOSHINES.COM).



**COLORADO**  
Department of Human Services



## We Need You to Help Make a Difference!



Early Childhood Councils were established in State legislation to help improve quality, access, and equity of early childhood services across early learning, health and mental health, and family support. Councils are composed of local partners working in partnership to help create a comprehensive system to address the needs of young children and their families. Parents are key stakeholders in the work. Triad Early Childhood Council, the Council for Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Gilpin counties, also serves as our Local Inter-agency Coordinating Council. We are seeking a parent representative to fill a slot on the Council. This is a wonderful way to learn about various agencies and initiatives that support children and their families, help work toward creative solutions to challenging issues, and to make sure family voices are heard. For more information, contact the Triad Executive Director, Pat Bolton, at 303 914-6527.



*Parenting a child with special needs can be overwhelming.*

*We get it. Let us help.*

## Mobilizing Families:



The Arc’s award-winning Mobilizing Families training will help you unlock the mystery of disability resources by giving you the tools and information to help your child thrive.

Participants will receive 12 hours of training split into easily manageable two-hour sessions each week. These classes that will build your skills and confidence, empowering you to effectively advocate for your children in all aspects of life. Each series includes an in-depth look at special education, healthcare, insurance, community resources, and so much more!

Parenting is hard enough already. You shouldn’t have to struggle to find answers you can trust. That’s why – through the support of [The Daniels Fund](#) – we are offering this amazing resource at no cost. That’s right, it’s really **FREE:**

- FREE training materials
- FREE childcare for all of your children
- FREE dinner for your family

***What are you waiting for?***

[http://www.arcjc.org/whatwedo/classetraining/mobilizing\\_families.html](http://www.arcjc.org/whatwedo/classetraining/mobilizing_families.html)

# FAMILY FUN

## DENVER ZOO FREE DAYS (COLORADO RESIDENTS ONLY)

**WHEN:** Nov. 3, 6 and 16, 2017

**WHERE:** Denver Zoo

Say hello to the animals for free three times this fall. [The Denver Zoo](#), located in [City Park](#), spans over 75 acres and is home to more than 4,000 animals, including rare amur leopards, okapi, black rhinoceros, elephants, vampire bats, orangutan, Komodo dragons and more!



## HISTORIC OLDE TOWN ARVADA'S FESTIVAL OF SCARECROWS

When: October 7, 2017

Where: [Historic Olde Town Arvada Square, 7525 W 57th Ave, Arvada, CO 80002](#)

Cost: Free

The 21st annual [Festival of Scarecrows](#), Presented by [Historic Olde Town Arvada](#), will transform Olde Town Arvada's town square into a pumpkin patch filled with scarecrows of all shapes and sizes.

Bring costumed kids for the parade, enjoy a free hayride, navigate the corn maze, check out the giant pumpkins from the Arvada Gardeners, find a perfect pumpkin and be sure to vote for your favorite scarecrow, the winners will receive prizes.



## **Psst... Pumpkin Patches in and around Denver 2017 [Interactive Map]**

Listed are 15 pumpkin patches in Denver and in Denver Metro for you to choose from. Pumpkin patches are available to be viewed on an interactive map, that can provide you on-the-go directions, as well as a summary about each pumpkin patch and what you can expect during your visit.

*Psst... If you are interested in a guide that is specific only to festivals and all over Colorado, check out our ['Fall, Pumpkin & Harvest Festivals 2017 in Colorado'](#) guide!*