



Growing Times July 2021

Promoting the maximum development of the whole child and adult through innovative, individualized and comprehensive brain-centered programs and services.

A Family Affair

Linda Nesenson has been part of A Chance To Grow's family – and we've been part of hers – since 1991. Her journey mirrors ours, as this story demonstrates.

Linda's second son, Matthew, born in 1988, began having issues with speech and movement while he was still a toddler. By the time he was in kindergarten, the impact was obvious: "He was so overwhelmed with everything that was going on," remembers Linda, "he would just laugh and laugh, he didn't know what to do, he couldn't focus, he wasn't following anything. He would go on and on and then all of a sudden, he would just tire himself out and conk out." He was so disruptive to the class, he spent half the day in the hallway on a chair because they didn't know what to do with him.

By the time he was six, his pediatrician had diagnosed him with ADHD and had put him on Ritalin. "It wasn't doing anything, so they just wanted to keep upping and upping the dosage," recalls Linda, "so he developed a tic, eye blinking, and I said, 'no, we're not doing this.' The saving point came when I saw a flyer advertising the Boost Up Program."

This was being offered by New Visions, ACTG's alternative school designed specifically to help children like Matt who had trouble learning. As part of his enrollment process, Matt received a number of assessments he'd never had before. "His pediatrician, he never asked me, 'did he crawl, did he crawl on his tummy, did he creep on his hands and knees?' I had no idea. I had taken him to the eye doctor to have his vision checked and they would tell me his eyes were healthy and that he had 20/20 vision, but at New Visions, where they did the telebinocular screening, I learned that he had depth perception problems, which explained why he didn't want to play catch, he would want you to throw the ball, but he didn't want to catch it.

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Linda, pictured next to a photo of herself and a child receiving vision therapy, taken more than 20 years ago.

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They also found out his pinch grasp was way off, which explained why he liked to watch you color, but for him to hold the crayon, well...he just wasn't interested."

At the time, New Visions offered the occupational, vision and speech language therapy Matt needed in addition to the Boost Up program, so Linda enrolled him there in 1994. Like Matt, his cousin Ryan had also been diagnosed with ADHD, and he was also enrolled in the school. Linda soon started volunteering in the Boost Up program, and was ultimately hired as an educational assistant in 1998. Her sister, Ryan's mother Teresa, also came to work for the school in the office, her cousin was a paraprofessional, and her husband Gary came to work as a janitor. And so began a family affair.

At the time, New Visions was housed at St. Bridget's and offered Boost Up for children in grades 1-8. Students got Boost Up 5 days a week as part of their daily schedule. The success of the program with those students led the staff to consider ways to bring the program to more children. Hence the Minnesota Learning Resource Center, and the S.M.A.R.T. Program (*Stimulating Maturity through Accelerated Readiness Training*) came into being. Designed to easily incorporate the Boost Up approach into K-3 and Pre-K classrooms, the program has trained thousands of teachers in Minnesota and across the country, providing countless children with the brain development needed to succeed in school and beyond.

Matthew stayed with the program through the eighth grade. In addition to occupational, speech and vision therapy, Matt and Ryan received brain training via Audio-Visual Entrainment (AVE), which helps people self-regulate emotions. Both boys began to improve. "Matt could handle the group situation, he wasn't sitting in the hallway, he just got more engaged, more involved in what was going on, he could read, he was learning, he was calmer." Linda recalls that Matt's kindergarten teacher had predicted that he would never be able to read. After he had been at New Visions for a while, an educational assistant took him back to that teacher's room, and said "Matthew would like to read something for you." And he did.



Linda (right), pictured with a Summer Boost Up class from 2006.

Today, Matthew is grown up, steadily employed at a local store for the last seven years, and the father of four-year-old Xander. "If it wasn't for my experience with New Visions, with A Chance to Grow, I think Matt would be out there somewhere, in prison or homeless." That experience helped her recognize early that Xander, like Matt before him, had challenges. "Something was not quite right. The first thing is the speech, it wasn't coming, he's not saying Mama and Dada, he's not playing like a neurotypical toddler would play." When he was two, she told Xander's mom that she should bring him to ACTG for an occupational therapy evaluation. Today, Xander is receiving speech and occupational therapy at A Chance to Grow.

While Matthew left New Visions for middle school, and has since gone on to lead a wonderful life, Linda remained at ACTG. It was her second career, after spending 25+ years in the telephone business, but, she says, "Boost-Up became my first love." Over the years, her involvement has grown and changed, just as the agency has. Eventually, she also worked for the AVE program, Vision program, and as it expanded, the Clinical Services department as a clinical assistant. She has never formally retired because, as she says, this has become a family affair too. "The people here, they mesh so well together. I think it's because the goal is helping children in families, and so many of the people that work here have some sort of relationship with their own families or friends needing services," she says. Because of that shared experience, "the staff feels like family, too."



Stay updated about current brain-based workshops, seminars and events!

www.facebook.com/AChanceToGrow/



A Chance To Grow invites you to join us on Sunday, August 22 at Longshots Party Area at Canterbury Park in Shakopee for the **30th Running of the Race for the Children!** In addition to live racing, the event will feature a blackjack tournament (new!), the drawing for our 50/50 cash raffle, a silent auction, mini-games with prizes, a pick-six event, a wine pull, and fun activities for the whole family! Attendees will also receive a complimentary racing form and catered lunch.

Proceeds from the event support ACTG's essential programs and services. **To register, please visit ACTG.org/raceforthechildren.** Sponsorship opportunities are also available!



Neurofeedback: Learn and Train Workshop

Are you interested in learning about Neurofeedback, maybe even try a session? Curious about how to use Neurofeedback at home? If this is you, we invite you to join us on Wednesday, July 21 at 1:00 pm at ACTG for an opportunity to learn and experience what Neurofeedback is all about! Participants will be able to hook up to a Neurofeedback system and participate in a full-length brain-training session! **Seating is limited, so register today at ACTG.org/neurofeedback-workshop.**

For more details about the workshop, contact our Director of Neurotechnology, Kelly Pittman, at neuro@actg.org.



S.M.A.R.T. Workshops - Registration Now Open!

We are now accepting registrations for our 2021-22 S.M.A.R.T. and S.M.A.R.T. Pre-K Workshops! Boost your students' learning readiness skills with this amazing program! Our experienced instructors will help you understand how to easily implement brain-stimulating activities in your classroom. If you are an educator working with Pre-K-3rd graders, this program is for YOU! **Register today at ACTG.org/workshops.**

S.M.A.R.T. Workshops

- October 26-28, 2021
- February 22-24, 2022

S.M.A.R.T. Pre-K Workshops

- October 19-21, 2021
- March 1-3, 2022



Additionally, we have scheduled a 1-day **Bridging the Gap** workshop for Wednesday, September 29, 2021. This is a great workshop for educators working with small groups, including reading specialists, intervention teachers, Title I, special education teachers and paraprofessionals.

All workshops will be held at A Chance To Grow in Minneapolis, MN. **Register two weeks in advance and save \$25!**



Get Your Eyes and Ears Checked at A Chance To Grow!

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ACTG's Vision and Audiology Clinics are now accepting clients! If you or a loved one are struggling to see or hear clearly, or if you just need an annual check-up, please call us today at (612) 789-1236 to schedule an appointment. Our clinics offer:

- Quick appointments with minimal wait times
- Exams and assessments for the whole family
- Integrated services with additional interventions available
- Referrals and recommendations for continued treatment
- Most insurance plans are accepted



Home-Based Services Now Hiring Personal Care Assistants

ACTG's Home-Based Services is currently seeking new Personal Care Assistants (PCA) to care for individuals with special needs in the Twin Cities area. PCAs provide direct support to meet the health and safety needs of their clients, both in the home and in the community. Early morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours are often available. Applicants must be 18 years or older, have experience working with special needs individuals, have a required DHS background check and fingerprints, access to a reliable transportation and must complete DHS PCA certification test. For more information and to apply, please visit ACTG.org/employment.



SAUER FAMILY
— FOUNDATION —

Sauer Family Foundation Awards Turnquist \$12,000

We are excited to announce that the Sauer Family Foundation has awarded ACTG's Turnquist Child Enrichment Center a \$12,000 grant in support of its effort to move its curricular and assessment activities to online platforms, as well as to provide transportation to families enrolled in Turnquist's Teen Parent Program. Thank you to the Sauer Family Foundation for their continued support of our programs.



NORTHLAND
FOUNDATION

The Northland Foundation Supports S.M.A.R.T.

The Northland Foundation is supporting the MLRC's efforts to bring the S.M.A.R.T. approach to northern Minnesota by providing the Rock Ridge School District with a \$25,000 grant to provide K-3 educators with training and mentorship that will allow them to implement S.M.A.R.T. throughout the district. Thank you to The Northland Foundation for helping to grow S.M.A.R.T. in northern Minnesota.

Will you support A Chance To Grow's programs and services?

Visit ACTG.org, click on the "Donate" tab on the homepage and fill out the form. Your contribution makes a difference in the lives of children and adults with learning disabilities, developmental delays and brain injuries. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your generosity!

Want to view our newsletter online? Visit ACTG.org and sign-up to receive news and updates from A Chance To Grow.

Equal Employment Opportunity

A Chance To Grow provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants. Employment is based upon personal capabilities and qualifications without discrimination because of race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability, gender identity, genetic information, service in the military or any other protected characteristic as established by law. This policy of Equal Employment Opportunity applies to all policies and procedures relating to recruitment & hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, training and all other terms and conditions of employment.



1800 Second Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
(612)789-1236 | actg@actg.org