

MY SON'S EXPERIENCE AT DAVID GREGORY SCHOOL

By Lynne Glucoft

Some people may call me a little biased. It's true. I felt compelled to write this article after receiving a beautiful letter on Thanksgiving from my son's teacher, Kristin, about her being thankful for being able to teach our children and watch them advance. I was so touched by her letter and the love that she has for the children that she teaches, I cried.

My son, Michael, has been going to this school since he was 5. He is now almost 10. We originally were concerned about moving him from a public school to a private one. In the end, there were several reasons we chose David Gregory. First, we heard horror stories about some of the other private schools that we had looked at. It terrified us to hear about some of the "adverse" punishments that were used on children. Michael, being non-verbal, and a very large child in size and weight, security was our main concern. I had spoken with the Behaviorist at David Gregory and read their brochure and she assured me that they would only use positive behavior techniques to address behavior issues. Secondly, David Gregory is a small, warm environment where we knew that Michael would receive a lot of attention. It was perfect for Michael, whose sensory issues sometimes overwhelmed him in the public school classroom.

From the moment that he started at the school, we were very pleased by the way all of the staff were especially friendly and made us feel comfortable right away. We met the owners and the principal who all know each and every child's name and placement. Michael's teachers have always been young and energetic, putting all their efforts into addressing our concerns. We saw an immediate difference with Michael once he started at the school. He was more relaxed and happy. We were always made to feel that we could call at any time (and speak with the secretary – who is an absolute doll) or the teacher or make an appointment to come in at any time and speak with the teacher or Behaviorist about his programs and progress. Every IEP meeting has been pleasant and has involved our district's special education team as well as David Gregory's team – usually either a Director or the Principal would even attend. I can't tell you how many times I have called the school to leave a message for the teacher and have never been made to feel uncomfortable about my concerns or about Michael's behaviors –which was a huge change from having him in a public school. I provide objects from home so that they can address daily

living skills. I'm very involved in Michael's progress and ask a lot of questions and all of my concerns are always addressed. What I also love about the school is the projects they work on with the children. They expose them to activities that typical children experience. They have Halloween parades, an assimilation of apple picking, a Thanksgiving feast, field day, etc. Their art and crafts projects include appropriate celebration of Father's Day, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, where they learn about the holidays. They take pictures of the children in the classroom. My son's picture came out better than the "formal" picture – pure happiness on his face. That's all I can ask for in a school. I know that he is happy, learning as much as he possibly can, and is in a safe, caring environment. I would highly recommend David Gregory School for any autistic child.