

ADDIE'S STORY

BY HOLLY LEWIS MADDUX

When Addie Chason was born her parents had big dreams for her future and before long their tiny home seemed too small to contain them. When Addie was 16-months-old, the Chasons found a larger home that seemed just the right place for Addie to grow. It had a yard, a neighborhood full of kids, and a top-notch school nearby.

The Chasons decided to renovate it themselves and in a few short weeks they had painted the interior lovely shades of yellow and blue. Their work went fast, for Addie was "the perfect child." She lay in a playpen for hours-on-end watching the blades of the ceiling fan go around and hardly made a sound.

Yet at 22 months, Addie was still barely speaking, and her parents surmised something was wrong. Addie was diagnosed with autism. Shortly thereafter, she was enrolled in Early Achievements, a research program at Kennedy Krieger, where through intensive work with speech-language pathologists she gained the keys to language that she couldn't have grasped on her own. Initially, she learned to communicate using picture cards and American Sign Language, and then, as if learning a foreign language, Addie slowly began using words.

Addie completed the Early Achievements program six months ago. She is now three and her parents call her a "chatterbox." They savor the simplest of statements - her preference for lunch ("peanut butter, please") and request for a toy ("Elmo, thank you") and they plan for the future they envisioned for her from the start - including kindergarten at that top-notch school nearby.



Learn more about Kennedy Krieger's [Center for Autism and Related Disorders](#).