



**UNITED WAY
RIGHT HERE.**

Meet Will.

I'm sorry... two words you don't expect to hear after having a baby, just ask Will's parents, Angela and Michael.

They were optimistic, but prepared, when Will – the youngest of three boys – was born. Doctors were unable to locate Will's nasal bone, an indicator for Down syndrome, on an early ultrasound. Declining any additional prenatal testing, Will was given a one to two percent chance of having the genetic condition, as no other markers were seen. Angela and Michael were prepared for the possibility, but not panicked.

Will was born five weeks early and spent 13 days in the NICU. And, despite the odds, he had Down syndrome.

Fortunately, Angela and Michael knew where to turn – United Way Partner Coulee Children's Center. Their eldest son, Lane, had also needed the agency's Early Intervention program. Born at 33 weeks, Lane suffered a brain bleed and developed hydrocephalus, or "water on the brain." He underwent brain surgery at three weeks and five months of age. Thanks in part to the Early Intervention program funded by United Way, Lane is now a typical nine-year-old boy.

"Birth to Three has been there for my family not once, but twice. We are so grateful for United Way's support."

-Angela Palmer-Fisher

Needing Early Intervention twice has been a challenge for their family, but Angela and Michael don't want people to feel sorry for them, and certainly don't feel sorry for Will. If anything, their struggles have brought them closer. Will's family is grateful for what they have and the resources available in this community.

Will is doing great! The physical, occupational, and speech therapies provided by the Early Intervention program help Will meet developmental milestones. He loves the extra attention he gets when his therapists come right to his Westby home for their weekly "play dates." And his parents love the strategies that they are given to help Will meet his full potential. Will is walking and talking, and – not unlike other children his age – his vocabulary consists mostly of "what's that?" and "why?"

Will is off to an excellent start thanks to United Way support. He can do anything, it may just take him a little longer. By advocating for United Way, you create opportunities and understanding for all children in our five-county region. Please choose to LIVE UNITED.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

Great Rivers United Way

www.gruw.org

