

A Washington County mother is optimistic her son will grow up to have all the same opportunities as everyone else, thanks in large part to the support and care provided to him by The Threshold Inc.'s Birth to 3 program.

Conor was born prematurely, weighing only 2 pounds, 7 ounces. Admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Conor was a fighter. He was removed from most medical support in his first week and was strong enough to get taken home after 35 days.

Despite his rough start, Conor hit most first-year milestones, including walking at 11 months, and staying on track with motor skill development. His only noticeable shortfall, his mother Kristin said, was that he had not started to talk. Although the family pediatrician was not concerned, Kristin was. She contacted Birth to 3 and requested an evaluation. Birth to 3 is an in-home therapy and education program for Washington County families who have a child under the age of 3 who may be falling behind in development. The program receives funding from the United Way of Washington County. Conor was more than 2 years old, yet his spoken abilities were at a 12-month level and his comprehension skills were rated in the 12- to 18-month range. He intermediately began receiving weekly in-home speech therapy provided by a therapist with expertise in early childhood development. In addition to working with Conor during the sessions, the therapist teaches family members how to teach and model behaviors throughout the week.

“She has been a godsend,” Kristin said. “He learns really important language functions. He is learning legitimate spoken words as well as ways to express his needs and wants without speech.”

For Conor, Birth to 3 extends beyond speech. After sensory processing and sleep issues have been identified, he also has an occupational therapist who is teaching him how to cope with his surroundings on his own terms.

Conor is making significant progress, and his future is encouraging – thanks in large part to intervention from Birth to 3, which Kristin calls “absolutely life changing.”

“To have a program like this in place for your kid is absolutely critical,” she said. “This situation was out of our control and we did not know how to handle it. This program will get him on track to he can learn. This will impact how the rest of his life will play out. There are no words for what this will mean for his future.”