



Carmine's Story

(L to R) Carmine in his father Nick's arms, with brother Vincent, and mother Lisa

I clearly remember the Audiologist looking down at her paper and quietly saying, "Just remember you have a healthy, happy little boy." The look on her face and the tone in her voice confirmed my worry before her words did; Carmine had lost his hearing in both ears. It was not the news I wanted to hear and I immediately broke down in tears. Getting this news only a few short weeks after being discharged from a nearly month-long hospital stay felt indescribably devastating. My second-born, a beautiful baby boy now about 15 months old, was deaf. He had already been through so much during his treatment for meningitis. I couldn't imagine having to navigate this diagnosis as well.

Finding Sound Start Babies

Fast forward a few weeks and I was introduced to an amazing group of people at the Sound Start Babies Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. From the moment I first spoke with someone at the Program, I knew we were on the right path. That feeling only grew stronger after I met the staff in person. Beginning with home visits, and then through Carmine's in-person classes, the education and support provided by Sound Start Babies was unmatched.

Many parents feel nervous about leaving their children in the care of others, but my husband and I felt comforted knowing Carmine was in capable hands and having tons of fun at the Sound Start Babies nursery. We would often receive photo updates of him playing, creating

"Carmine had lost his hearing in both ears. It was not the news I wanted to hear and I immediately broke down in tears."



art, or dancing. He was even excited to see the school through the car window in the morning, smiling and clapping as we got closer. We were relieved that our child would be with other children like himself and

would be less frustrated because the teachers were better able to communicate with him. They would provide him with the tools needed to be successful in a hearing world.

Support for the Entire Family

An unexpected way Sound Start Babies helped our family was in the way they helped me personally. I had no doubt the team would be helpful to Carmine, but I had no idea how much they would provide support to me. All the teachers and staff supported me with a shoulder to cry on, kind words, and recommendations for additional resources. I never felt judged or pitied. They went the extra mile to ensure our entire family was equipped with the tools we needed to navigate this new way of life.

The staff have stood by our side through so many important milestones and situations, most recently during Carmine's transition out of early intervention and into preschool. They were instrumental in encouraging our home school district to conclude that it was critical for Carmine's early education success to attend preschool out of district at the Lake Drive Program. Here he would receive the additional

They went the extra mile to ensure our entire family was equipped with the tools we needed to navigate this new way of life.



therapies and support needed to thrive. And that's exactly what he's doing.

During a recent parent-teacher conference, Carmine's Teacher of the Deaf commented that he was making incredible progress this year. He pays attention to everything; he enjoys participating in the lessons and he even tries to help his friends with their work. His speech teacher echoed his progress, noting that his vocalizations are improving, and she is hearing words emerge.

It is really difficult to easily sum up how we feel about the Sound Start Babies Program and the wonderful professionals that work there. They have truly become an extension of our family. We are so fortunate to have had access to this program and we will be forever grateful! The resources provided by Sound Start Babies and the Sound Start Foundation have changed the trajectory of our son's life.

Please make a gift today to Sound Start Foundation to help us continue to serve babies and toddlers with hearing loss throughout New Jersey.

Donate today at www.soundstartfdn.org

With your help, our babies can be whoever they dream to be.

Each year Sound Start Foundation supports up to 60% of the funding needed to run the Sound Start Babies Program. Together we ensure every family can receive the help they need immediately, regardless of their financial status or funding from the State.