



CHILD & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

It all began with an abnormal crawl.



Meet Aspyn

Nine-month-old Aspyn appeared to be developing quite typically. The only thing that seemed a bit unusual was her crawl, which led her pediatrician to recommend an evaluation by a physical therapist. Aspyn's older sister was already seeing Miranda, one of Joya's PTs, so her parents knew right away where they wanted to go.

Miranda noticed that Aspyn had an extra fold of baby fat on one of her legs, causing it to be significantly larger than the other. She consulted with her colleagues as well as Joya's Medical Director, Matt Thompson, which led the family to genetics testing and the rare diagnosis of Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome.

This diagnosis is a potential lifesaver for Aspyn, since the syndrome puts kids like her at increased risk of developing certain pediatric cancers. Her early diagnosis allows doctors to monitor her closely with cancer screenings every three months.

Aspyn's condition is classified as a genetic overgrowth syndrome, where some of the cells in her body don't know when to stop growing. Fortunately, most children and adults with Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome do not have serious medical problems and their life expectancy is usually normal. Miranda has worked with Aspyn to help her use her legs more equally and symmetrically.

As the only Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence in our region, Joya's staff is uniquely positioned to identify rare conditions and syndromes that may not be commonly seen or readily apparent. They also listen closely to what Dr. Thompson calls a parent's "spidey sense" and take it seriously.

"We credit Miranda, Dr. Thompson and the team at Joya for leading us to her diagnosis,"

says Rhonda, Aspyn's mother. "They helped us get on the right path to the important medical care she needs, and I don't think we'd be there if it weren't for them."

Aspyn, who is now 19 months, lights up when she sees Miranda. "She just loves playing with Miranda," says Rhonda. "She laughs through the whole visit and doesn't realize she's getting physical therapy treatment at the same time. She started out at a crawl and is now running everywhere she goes!"



Physical Therapist Miranda enjoying playtime with Hallie & Aspyn.

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Doing Good





Colleen Fuchs

A Message from the Executive Director

SETTING THE STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE

At Joya Child & Family Development, we are proud to set the standard for early intervention in our region. As Eastern Washington's only designated Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence (NDC), Joya is more than a therapy clinic - we are a lifeline for families, a source of expert care, and a place where futures are transformed.

The NDC designation, awarded by the Washington State Department of Health, is not just a title - it's a recognition of the highest level of care. There are only 18 NDCs in the entire state, and Joya is one of just three located east of the Cascades. This distinction underscores our commitment to delivering comprehensive, specialized services for children with developmental delays or disabilities - regardless of a family's financial means.

To earn the NDC designation, organizations must provide additional professional development for staff and employ pediatric specialists including a Medical Director. At Joya, we are fortunate to have Dr. Matt Thompson in that critical role - a pediatrician whose insight, compassion, and dedication have made a lasting impact on countless families in Spokane. You'll learn more about "Dr. Matt" and his vital work in this issue.

Joya is more than a center for therapy - it's a place where families find guidance, children make breakthroughs, and hope is renewed every day. We are honored to walk alongside families through some of their most vulnerable moments, offering expert care, unwavering support, and a community of strength.

From early intervention to lifelong impact, Joya is helping shape a healthier, more inclusive future for our children and our community.

I hope you'll read on to learn more about Spokane's only Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence. And if you want to see it for yourself, pay us a visit.

JUST CALL 509-326-1651 TO SET UP A TOUR AND SEE FIRSTHAND THE DIFFERENCE JOYA IS MAKING IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

MEET DR. MATT

Matt Thompson, MD • Medical Services

Longtime pediatrician Matt Thompson was raised in Spokane and went to the University of Washington for medical school. He did his pediatrics training at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, before returning home to serve his community. In addition to serving as Joya's Medical Director, Dr. Thompson is a full-time pediatrician at the Kids Clinic in Spokane. He is board-certified by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR INVOLVE?

I am the member of the Joya team who is called upon to provide families and the team input from a medical perspective. A family may be sent my way if a parent or colleague has concerns about a child not progressing as expected. They may have questions about how their child moves, or a unique physical feature. Or the little one may have complex medical needs, and the family could use some help coordinating their care. Once I get to know more about the child, about the family's understanding of their developmental differences, and their hopes for their child, I can then try to help by sharing my impressions and suggestions with parents, the Joya team and the child's primary care provider. Sometimes we just sit and smile as we watch their child play. I am available to Joya leadership regarding issues needing medical input. Additionally, staff is always welcome to run things by me, should they want the opinion of a pediatrician.

WHY IS THE WORK YOU DO AT JOYA SO IMPORTANT FOR FAMILIES?

I think parents appreciate having a pediatrician available to discuss any questions or concerns they may have. These range from what may be the cause of their child's delays and differences, to how they might help their child sleep better. I may not always have the answers, but Joya provides an opportunity for me and the parents to try to sort things out and seek some clarity. I am honored to have this privilege.

WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB?

Usually, when I drive up to Joya for an afternoon clinic, I will see a parade of adorable, happy little kids coming out of the building after a fun day of therapeutic play. Whether they run out, walk out, are wheeled out or carried out - joy swirls all around them, and it is contagious. I cherish getting to be part of the "Joya Embrace" that children and families receive when they come to us during what is often an uncertain, frightening time. Many roads lead to Joya. Every child here is different, and every child will have their own abilities and potential to work towards. At Joya, we celebrate even the smallest "wins," and I love seeing parents start to adopt that perspective. Working at Joya, not only do we get to watch a child's potential blossom, but we get to watch a family's hope blossom. It is all rewarding.



ALUMNI PROFILE

Teen Board Member Says Joya Changed Her Life



JOSEPHINE CORBIN

"Joya is not just a part of my past; it's part of who I am... every child is seen for who they are and who they can become."

"I truly can't imagine my life without Joya," says 17-year-old Josephine Corbin. Josephine attended Joya (then the Spokane Guilds' School) from ages 1 to 3 and is now paying it forward as an active volunteer and member of Joya's Teen Board.

Josephine was born with significant heart defects and underwent two open heart surgeries before she turned 1. She didn't rebound as quickly as her doctors would have liked, so she received speech, occupational and physical therapy at Joya.

When Josephine started services she had a feeding tube and was unable to walk. She made fast progress, learning to eat, gaining weight, and eventually standing up and taking her first steps. "Joya also allowed my parents to conveniently have all my therapists under one roof. They were able to work together to develop the best plan for me. They really did change my life," she said.

One of Josephine's favorite memories is visiting with Santa at the Joya Christmas parties. She still attends these Christmas parties, but now as a member of Joya's Teen Board. "It's such a cool full circle moment," she said. "Spokane is so fortunate to have Joya and I am proud to represent it as a teenager and help build awareness of such an incredible organization."

Josephine's experiences with Joya, as well as Shriners Children's Spokane, have inspired her current work as an advocate for teenage health care. In fact, her advocacy recently earned her the Chase Youth Award for Personal Achievement. She has been accepted to the Georgetown University Leadership Program and is looking forward to attending this summer.

"I feel so grateful to have grown up with the support of Joya and I hope that I can stay connected to this community for the rest of my life," she said.



ABOVE AND BEYOND

A COLLECTIVE CENTURY OF SERVICE: Joya bids farewell to three long-time therapists

This spring Joya celebrated the retirements of three individuals who have lived and worked through decades of change. From the Spokane Guilds' School in a surplus school district building on Garland Avenue to Joya Child & Family Development in a new state-of-the-art facility on Superior Street – they've grown and adapted right along with the children they cared for.

Chances are if you've received services or attended an event at the Spokane Guilds' School or Joya over the past three decades, you have come across Virginia Knight, Nikie Noldin or Ann Pirttima. As they move on to the next chapter, we wanted to share their collective and inspiring impact on generations of kiddos.



VIRGINIA KNIGHT
Occupational Therapist:

05/18/1992–05/28/2025
1188 kids served

33
YEARS



WHAT FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY:

"Virginia was my daughter's Occupational Therapist (OT) and now I became an OT! My daughter is 25 and I've been an OT for 14 years. Joya is amazing!"

"Virginia did my son's intake at Joya six-and-a-half years ago and I still remember how much support and guidance she gave so quickly. We loved her!"



ANN PIRTTIMA
Speech Language Pathologist

07/08/1986–05/01/2025
1638 kids served

39
YEARS



WHAT FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY:

"The enthusiasm and passion she has for Joya is infectious. Helping children with different needs was clearly her calling and the fact that she was changing lives for nearly 40 years is a testament to both Ann and Joya."

"Ann's legacy is woven into the lives of the many families she has touched over her career at Joya, including ours. We are especially grateful for the way she helped our little one find his voice and her influence will echo in every word he speaks, a testament to the love and dedication she brought to her work."

5,066
children served
COLLECTIVELY

107

YEARS OF COMBINED SERVICE
TO INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN
OUR COMMUNITY.

NIKIE NOLDIN
Speech Language Pathologist

11/27/1989–06/30/2025
2240 kids served

WHAT FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY:

"Nikie is the best! She was the kindest and most understanding with our upside-down world! As a mom figuring it out with a child struggling, she always had kind and wise words of wisdom."

"Nikie is fabulous! Our very first speech therapist. She gave Riley the very best start. So caring and supportive to kids and parents both."



35
YEARS

THE NEXT GENERATION

As longtime employees retire and Joya's enrollment continues to grow, we look to hire the next generation of early intervention specialists to continue to serve children in our community for decades to come. Visit our website at joya.org to learn more about what makes Joya such a great place to work. Current openings are listed at joya.org/apply-here.



Innovia Helps Fund Playgroups

Joya was thrilled to be among the nonprofits recently awarded a grant through Innovia's annual Community Grants Program. The funds will help support Joya's Community Playgroups, which offer inclusive, educational play for children in our community. Interested in joining the fun? Learn more at joya.org/playgroups.

YOUR SUPPORT

Thanks for Dashing!

Our annual Donut Dash was full of fun and sweetness as families and friends of Joya turned out on June 1st to run for the cause. Thank you to all who participated and especially to our sponsors, listed below, for making this event possible!



MAKES JOYA

Showing up for Joya

Joya was so honored to be among the 18 local nonprofits who received grant funds from the annual Women Helping Women Fund Give Like a Woman event in May. The inspiring afternoon was filled with hope, inspiration and generosity! Such support makes it possible for Joya to reach children in our community with critical early intervention services, no matter their financial situation.



Caring for Community

Many thanks to volunteers from Numerica Credit Union who took time out of their day to come clean up and beautify the grounds around Joya as we headed into the summer season. At Joya, volunteers are essential to our mission of supporting children and families. We offer diverse opportunities for you to contribute your time and skills. Check out all the opportunities at joya.org/volunteer.



LEAVING A LEGACY

In July of 2020, Joya lost one of its greatest advocates for children and families when Marilyn Henderson, who helped shaped Joya's program over a nearly 40 year career, passed away.

BUT TODAY, HER LEGACY LIVES ON AT JOYA.

Joya's staff established Marilyn's Closet to help fulfill a need, while honoring the spirit of Marilyn, who had dedicated years to Mrs. Santa's Workshop at Joya's old home on Garland Avenue.

"Marilyn's Closet is full of age appropriate developmental toys that our therapy team can provide to families in need," said Ginette Kerkering, Joya's Program Manager. "A lot of the toys our team uses with children are designed to reach specific therapy goals. But families can't always afford to buy them. It's so nice to be able to leave behind new, therapeutic toys for a child to play with at home as they build new skills."

Thanks to the generosity of donors, Marilyn's Closet is stocked with new items throughout the year.

It's a simple, yet very impactful, way to continue Marilyn's legacy of generosity and compassion toward the families we serve. See what's needed to fill Marilyn's Closet by visiting our Amazon Wishlist at: joya.org/wish-list.

POSSIBLE!

GIVE

When you give to Joya, you're giving hope. Whether it's helping with the purchase of toys for Marilyn's Closet, donating to help cover the cost of care or making a planned gift, there are many ways to support Joya now and into the future.

Learn more about how you can support Spokane's only Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence at joya.org/give.



Child & Family Development
 1016 N. Superior St.
 Spokane, WA 99202

JOIN US FOR
 THESE UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS



Joya Telethon on KHQ
APRIL 2026

To stay up to date on the latest with events,
 to register or become a sponsor, visit:

JOYA.ORG/EVENTS

MARCH
13
 2026