

MGH Lurie Center for Autism - A Decade of Hope, Dedication, and Discovery

Lisa Harris:

My son is Nathan. He's a 17 year old young man who has severe autism. He is a nonverbal young man and he's got quite a personality. You just have to get to know him to appreciate him.

Ann Neumeyer:

Back in 2009 we were a small program caring for children with autism and we did great work, but we were struggling. Then along came a gift. Since the generous gift of the Lurie family, we've been fortunate to expand our clinical care.

Lisa Harris:

Autism picked us and none of us had any idea that we were going to be going down this road, but here people picked autism to help us navigate this journey.

Ann Neumeyer:

This gift has transformed us into a rich center doing research, education and expanded clinical care.

Christopher McDougle:

We have an array of providers from multiple disciplines and that may strike people as a little bit unusual because historically autism has been thought of as a disease of the brain, but we're learning that it's a systemic full body illness.

Lisa Harris:

Through all the transitions through the ages, the Lurie Center is consistently there caring and supporting and collaborating and really making sure to meet people where they are.

Christopher McDougle:

We've really developed some innovative approaches to treatment of people with autism and their families. For example, the doctors make a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan and then we hand the family off to a family resource specialist who does the hard work like, 'Let's look into the school system. How well is the child functioning? Is it an appropriate placement?'

Lisa Harris:

My son has been able to access his life in ways that we didn't think were previously possible.

Christopher McDougle:

Most people, when they think about a person with autism, they think about a child. They don't think about somebody that one day may have open heart surgery because they have coronary artery disease or develop cancer. One of Nancy Lurie Marks' strong requests was that the Lurie Center makes certain that we take care of adults. The parents of a 21 year old. They'll often say to me, "Well, what's going to happen when he turns 22? Because I know that you guys don't take care of folks." I said, "No, you'll come back and see me the next week." And they're so relieved that we're going to continue their care for their lifetime. The only reason we're able to do that is because of the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation as well as other friends of The Lurie Center.

Lisa Harris:

Every parent is looking for the best care they can find. If you've made it to the Lurie Center, that box has already been checked.

Christopher McDougle:

This is a site of high innovation. We're in the top research hospital in the world. We treat more than 3,000 patients at any one time. The Lurie Center is going to generate findings in autism regarding possible causes as well as potential treatments.

Lisa Harris:

Autism is one of those things that can turn you around in a split second. It can grab you without your knowledge or permission and take you on a journey that you had never expected. You may be flying down the road with no control other than to blow your horn and try to warn others. You may find yourself veered completely off the road and in front of the windshield there's a face and a voice. And for me, there's a face of a man with his round glasses and his signature bow tie who says, "I got your call. I'm here to help." And he does.

Christopher McDougle:

The past 10 years have gone so quickly. And that's because we've been so busy taking care of patients, trying to figure out causes of autism, teaching the next generation of providers, advocating for people with autism and their families. I can't imagine how fast the next 10 years is going to go, but I know for certain that I'm going to work even harder because there's so much to do.