



## Center Helps Children Who Struggle With Speech

### Facility Is Attracting Families From Across Country

**WEST BLOOMFIELD, Mich.** -- Imagine how frustrating it would be to speak and not have anyone be able to understand what you're saying. Experts said millions of children suffer from problems that leave them unable to communicate effectively. A Detroit-area facility is helping change that, and it's attracting attention from all across the country.

Carol Christopher said at first, she wasn't concerned when daughter Mackenzie didn't start talking as early as her older children.

"I just thought she was my content child, and with two older siblings, they did all her talking for her," said Christopher.

But as Mackenzie turned three, Carol realized there was a problem.

"It was really scary. At three years old, she wasn't saying anything and nobody could understand her, except me," said Christopher. "The other 3-year-olds in our neighborhood wouldn't play with her because they can't understand her."

Christopher found the help Mackenzie needed at the Kaufman Children's Center in West Bloomfield. The staff specializes in using music and innovative techniques to help children who can't speak, or speak clearly.

"We see all sorts of different neurological conditions, we see many children that have autism spectrum disorders, other kinds of chromosome deletions and syndromes. We see children that have ADHD and other learning challenges," said director Nancy Reinheimer Kaufman.

Kaufman said many children know what they want to say but are unable to coordinate the muscle movements necessary to say those words.

Six-year-old Eric Demeter is from Southern California. His parents brought him to the Kaufman Children's Center for help after seeing Kaufman's techniques at a seminar two years ago.

"He needs to figure out how to say the words, and what they do here is they show him what he needs to do to get the words out," said Raquel Demeter.

Kaufman said the center is treating more children from across the country.

"We try to provide programs for three to four weeks, so that if you are from out of state you can live here for a month and participate and learn how to take this program and implement it at home," said Kaufman.

Eric Demeter suffers from a speech disorder called apraxia of speech. His parents said getting the diagnosis was difficult, but his progress at the Kaufman Children's Center has given them new hope.

"A lot of emotions happen when you actually realize that there's something wrong with your child, that he isn't OK. It's pretty tough, but yet you're happy that you know what the problem is, and that you can fix it," said Raquel Demeter.

It's a feeling Carol Christopher understands. Mackenzie is now four and finally able to share her thoughts.

"I can't even say enough about it. You can see the smiles on my little girl's face when people can understand her," said Christopher.

"For the children, I think that it is just a huge relief to be able to communicate vocally," said Kaufman. "So many parents say to me, 'I felt so guilty the other day because I had to ask my child to be quiet.'"

The Kaufman Children's Center treats a very wide range of problems in children from infants through high school.