



Capper Update

SUMMER 2025

Meet Isaiah: Finding his Voice and...

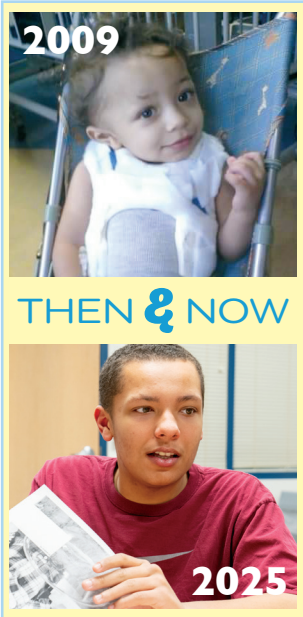
Making Waves!

In early 2008, Melissa Wescott was joyously preparing to welcome her first child when she saw a brief news report on the prevalence of Autism, not knowing how important and impactful what she had seen would be for her and her precious son, Isaiah.

"Isaiah was a sweet, easy baby who didn't cry much even for a bottle. Initially, I wasn't concerned until he got a few months older, and he was not babbling, tracking my gaze, and at five months old, he was excitedly bouncing in an exersaucer and started flapping his hands. I immediately thought he might have Autism based on the report I had seen," shared Melissa. Given that he was still young, and cognitive delays weren't officially diagnosed at the time until a child reached age 3 or 4, the family moved forward, hoping that Isaiah

would soon start meeting developmental milestones.

At his six-month check-up, Isaiah's pediatrician was concerned that he couldn't sit up independently and referred the family to a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, suspecting he had scoliosis. Under the advice from the surgeon, they waited to see if the curvature would correct itself, and when he was nine months old, an MRI of the brain and spine confirmed that Isaiah had Idiopathic Progressive Infantile Scoliosis and Chiari Malformation II. "My head was spinning with the realization that my baby needed an experimental non-surgical spine treatment and brain surgery," noted Melissa.



By the time Isaiah was two and a half years old, he had healed from brain surgery, and his spine was nearly corrected. However, he still hadn't met those developmental milestones and wouldn't eat solid food. "I just KNEW he had Autism, but I couldn't get answers or a diagnosis. We finally saw a developmental pediatrician in Wichita who labeled him as having Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), which is now classified as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She told us he probably wouldn't learn to walk, talk...have any meaningful speech, or learn his name. We left there with no resources, places to go, or people to contact - nothing," shared Melissa.



"It's been a long journey, and there's plenty more ahead of us. We would not be where we are today without the amazing services Isaiah has received at Capper Foundation."

—Melissa Wescott, Isaiah's Mom

For the past seven years, since moving to Topeka, Isaiah has been a part of the Capper Foundation family, receiving pediatric therapy services and participating in adaptive recreation programs including iCan Swim and C.A.S.T. for Kids. When he started coming to Capper, he could only use one or two words to communicate his wants and needs and was prone to wandering. Today, he can say full sentences as he continues to learn basic daily living skills, including cooking, as well as how to problem solve. "The impact Capper has had on our family is huge. I always knew he was smart, but no idea just how smart until he started to come out of his shell and unlock his full potential. He's carrying over the things he's learned and using them at home and school with a lot of confidence and pride in himself, noted Melissa. It's been a long journey, and there's plenty more ahead of us. We would not be where we are today without the amazing services Isaiah has received at Capper Foundation".

With your support, children and teens like Isaiah are defying the odds, finding their voice, and advancing their hopes and dreams toward a future full of possibilities.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

Summer is a time of momentum and milestones, and this edition of our newsletter highlights the many ways Capper Foundation continues to build greater independence

and inclusion on behalf of those we serve.

We are pleased to share the dedication of the Caitlyn Halsey Empowerment Center, home to the Carol Hamilton Training Kitchen and Dialogue Coffee House which are both shining examples of how your generosity and commitment help create

life-changing opportunities. These milestones reflect the heart of our mission to empower people of all ages and abilities.

It all begins with an infant, child, or teen benefiting from Capper Foundation's pediatric therapies. It is these wow moments, like those in Isaiah's story above, that truly change the lives of the children and families we serve. These early victories pave the way for future success in school, employment, and independent living.

Our Employment Services Program continues to thrive as a vital part of our growing continuum of services, helping individuals achieve first jobs, meaningful careers, and a stronger sense

of purpose. At Capper, we often say we are our stories—and we're privileged to have a front-row seat to so many inspiring firsts.

Thank you for partnering with us and believing in the individuals we serve and support. Your generosity and shared passion for our mission make it all possible.

Together, we are creating a community where individuals of all abilities are empowered to grow, participate, and reach their full potential.

With gratitude,

Zach Ahrens
President & CEO

Building Abilities and Empowering Futures...

Capper Opens New Job Training Facility

The ribbon has been cut for the *Caitlyn Halsey Empowerment Center*! The facility is now providing expanded space for Capper Foundation's Job Training and Job Placement program for teens and adults with disabilities.

Now that Dialogue Coffee House has grown from one location in 2023 to five locations in 2025, the original kitchen was too small to accommodate training and production



to support their program of employing individuals with disabilities. The new Center houses a 1,000 square foot commercial kitchen providing additional workspace, larger ovens, dry goods storage and a more conducive space to simultaneously support staff training and production of baked items sold at the Dialogue storefronts. On April 25, the kitchen was officially named the *Carol Hamilton Training Kitchen* in honor of our cooking instructor for Capper's Adult Day Program, thanks to a generous donor.

The Center also includes a Conference Room for private meetings providing guests easy access to the services of Dialogue Coffee House for special catering needs.

Join the Conversation.



Dialogue Coffee House provides meaningful employment to over 50 adults and teens with intellectual and developmental disabilities giving them a place to join the conversation, without the definition of their abilities.

**dialogue
coffee house**

Now serving in 5 Topeka area locations.

Learn more at: www.dialoguecoffeehouse.com

IALOGUE COFFEE HOUSE IS A COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OF CAPPER FOUNDATION.



On June 4, 2025, Capper Foundation celebrated the grand opening of the Caitlyn Halsey Empowerment Center with a ribbon-cutting, tours of the new facility, and a look inside the Carol Hamilton Training Kitchen.

A large Training Room accommodating up to forty guests is equipped with technology and amenities for the purpose of enhancing Capper Foundation's job training programming, supporting the needs of our friends who want to enjoy community employment. The Training Room will also serve as a convenient meeting space for support groups of families and other community groups' needs.

Of the civilian labor force in Kansas for ages 18-64, there are 1,272,888 individuals without a disability and 106,604 with a diagnosed disability. Of the population with a disability 97,539 are employed, leaving 9,065 unemployed and actively seeking work*. Capper Foundation is committed to our mission of empowering individuals of all ages to be valued and have the opportunity to live out their hopes and dreams. Working among peers in their communities builds skills, confidence, self-reliance and the joy of contributing.




The opening of the Caitlyn Halsey Empowerment Center, named after the founder of Dialogue Coffee House, will help in fulfilling those dreams.


**2023 Kansas Population & Labor Force by Disability Status
Kansas Department of Labor*

TOMORROW'S POSSIBILITIES BEGIN WITH TODAY'S GIFT

DONATE BY PHONE

 785.272.4060

DONATE BY MAIL

 Use enclosed envelope

DONATE ONLINE

 www.capper.org



3500 SW Tenth Ave.
Topeka, Kansas 66604
785.272.4060

1500 E Eighth Ave., Ste. 201
Winfield, Kansas 67156
620.221.9431

622 N Haverhill Road
El Dorado, Kansas 67042
316.320.7531

www.capper.org



Pediatric services available only at our Topeka location. Capper Foundation is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.