

Iowa Public Television

The 2nd day after my first son was born, Dr. Basa Chandramouli and Dr. Thomas Becker walked into my hospital room to tell me they had just discovered Noah had a very rare congenital heart defect, and needed immediate open heart surgery in order to save his life. Unfortunately for Noah, that was just the beginning – through the course of time, Noah has had three heart attacks, one stroke, four open heart surgeries, two pacemakers, and numerous other surgeries, and spent countless months living at the hospital.

He has a large badge of courage running down his chest, but he also has more internal scars as well that blocked his ability to chew and to communicate like his typical peers.

Noah's main pathway of communication is through echolalia. He memorizes everything he hears either read to him or things he hears through the television. He then repeats it back again and again in the same sing songy voice of the book or television show. He repeats it until he knows it by heart and keeps it in a file system inside his head. When he needs to communicate something, he will pick out a phrase from his memory and replaces some of the words with words from his own life. Then he'll say the phrase again with the same voice cues as the show. So, for us, the educational programming that wasn't loaded with inappropriate commercials was literally life changing. IPTV opened up doors for Noah and for Jack – his brother– who was diagnosed with autism at two and half years of age.

The visualization, life lessons, and music caught Noah and Jack's attention – like with any child – but for them it was truly life changing. IPTV programming offers children social stories/situations that play out safely right in front of them and without interruption from commercials. The boys have learned a huge variety of skills from how to stay calm when you get mad; how to make a friend; say I'm sorry; or ask for help. IPTV still and will probably always hold an interest and many lessons for both Jack and Noah.

PBSKids and IPTV opened their world and helped them find the phrases and ways to communicate with me. As a mother, I can't even begin to express how incredible their programming is and how vital it has been and continues to be in their development.

Noah will turn 18 on August 12. It is a big year for him and for us. What does Noah want to do to celebrate? Like every year before, Noah puts on his Dan Wardell cape he received as a birthday gift two years ago and we will go to the Iowa State Fair. Inside the commercial building, is the one place my son treasures more than anything – the IPTV booth.

Please don't silence my sons. Fund IPTV.