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My daughter, Lauren, is the namesake of our organization. She was born with a terminal genetic syndrome called Sanfilippo. In an effort to extend her life, my husband and I decided to do an experimental transplant.

After Lauren's transplant, she desperately needed therapy but at that time there was such a shortage that I felt like all I was doing was putting her on waiting lists. The therapy I was able to get for her was in the Scottsdale and Phoenix area because at that time there wasn't any therapy centers in the southeast valley. That meant Lauren was spending much of her time driving around town instead of getting to spend that time playing and enjoying her childhood. I also found it frustrating that none of the therapists were able to communicate with each other so they could not develop a cohesive plan for her.

I started to feel like something needed to be done about the way therapy for children with developmental disabilities was handled. I felt like if all the therapists were together in one location, we would see more progress with the kids if the therapists used a collaborative approach. One of Lauren's providers, Margaret Travillion, had similar dreams for these children. We came together and decided to open Lauren's Institute for Education (L.I.F.E.). In August of 2007, we opened the doors to this one-of-a-kind facility that offered all disciplines of therapy under one roof.

Over the last ten years, I have seen L.I.F.E. become everything I had hoped it would. We started in a small 7,000 square foot building and have evolved into a thriving school, behavioral program, therapy center, and adult day program on ten acres of property. We are living L.I.F.E.'s mission and vision and using L.I.F.E.'s values to continue to bring quality services that focus on nurturing the whole child, not just his or her disability.

As L.I.F.E. continues to grow, it is my hope that we are able to reach hundreds of children each year while supporting therapists, providers, educators, members of the community and most of all, our families. As a parent with a child with special needs, I understand the needs of families that come to us. I know the struggles I went through are shared by all of us. And that need inspired me to want to open L.I.F.E. and continues to drive me to ensure the legacy of my daughter helps those like her for many more years to come.

Carrie Reed  
Co-founder and President  
Lauren's Institute for Education