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Local Family Using Breakthrough Autism Treatment

(DAPHNE, Ala.) - Autism is known as the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the United States, and, so far, it has no means of detection or cure; only a vast array of therapies and studies.

However there is a treatment that is making a big difference for one Daphne child, and hundreds of others in the area.

The relatively new therapy called Integrated Listening uses the power of music, and is used at Kids Kount in Daphne.

"We've never seen a child that never made marked gains," Occupational Therapist Cindy Dawkins said. "Out of 35 years of being an occupational therapist, this has been the most powerful tool that I've used."

Dawkins said the therapy calls for an iPod, some special headphones and digitally-altered classical music. The system stimulates multi-tasking in the brain by having the autistic child listen to the music while performing various tasks.

"He's listening to music through the ear cups, and he's also listening through bone conduction," Dawkins said. "There's a small transducer in the top of the headphones so the music is transmitted by bone conduction as well as air conduction."

Dawkins said it has worked tremendously for hundreds of children they have treated.

"It just has a global effect on not just their motor skills, but their cognitive skills for making their brain available for learning," Dawkins said.

Allison Baxter said her son she and her husband adopted from Guatemala as an infant, 9-year-old Huey Baxter, was diagnosed with autism. Baxter said Huey learned to do things like jump, catch a ball and laugh at joke only a couple of years ago.

"When we brought him home from Guatemala, he was seven-and-a-half months old," Baxter said, "and we knew right away there was something

different. He couldn't sit up, he couldn't roll over so he had to be taught all of these things."

As Huey grew, Baxter said she and her husband grew more concerned.

"He still had trouble running, he had trouble skipping, he had trouble throwing a ball," Baxter said.

Huey couldn't talk either. Baxter said doctors couldn't figure out what's wrong, and recommended the boy be institutionalized for life.

"We had gone to a leading developmental specialist here in Mobile," Baxter said, "and he was followed for a year and a half and we were told that would be the best place for him; to be in an institution."

Baxter tried countless therapies other parents have used, but finally took Huey to Kids Kount to try Integrated Listening (iLs).

Cindy Dawkins said Baxter made tremendous progress.

He made a gain of 20 months of developmental gains in about a seven month period," Dawkins said.

"The first couple of rounds we didn't see a whole lot of change, and it was like boom, overnight," Baxter said. "We started getting quick answers, we started getting answers that made sense. He can tell you how he feels now. I can converse with my child right now, which, at one point, that wasn't even an option."

iLs is now a regular at-home therapy for Huey, and Baxter said she journals every new thing Huey can do. Huey is also now able to learn in a normal second grade classroom through the help of an aid.

"Huey can do," Baxter said, "but it's just a matter of pushing him to do instead of just allowing him a label, and making an excuse for him and saying this is as good as it gets because it's not."