



Welcome to our first quarterly newsletter!

We are so excited to share the very first edition of the Functional Foundations newsletter with you. This is more than just an update—it's a connection point for our families, supporters, and friends who share in our mission to help children with complex needs thrive.

As you read through this newsletter, we hope you feel inspired by the stories, encouraged by the progress of the children we serve, and connected to the growing community that makes Fun.Found. such a special place. Together, we are not just building skills—we are building foundations for life.

Mission	Empowering children, nurturing potential, building belonging. We promote the physical, social, and emotional well-being of children with complex medical and motor needs and their families through tailored, strength-based interventions that promote growth, independence, and community connection.
Vision	Fun.Found is building a community where every child is supported and every family is understood. We are creating a welcoming, community-centered space where children with complex needs and their families can access expert, collaborative care, engage in meaningful play and social connection, and thrive through shared support and innovation.
Support Us	Make a donation! Start a fundraiser! Volunteer! Donate goods and/or services!

Impact by the numbers:

Children & Families

- **218 children** served this year
- **441 families** supported since our inception

Therapy & Services

- **2352 therapy sessions** provided this year
- **10.75 average hours** of therapy per child per month
- **2 disciplines:** PT, OT

Growth Since 2021:

- **6 clinicians** added
- **6,000 sq ft** added
- **Countless** pieces new toys & equipment

Theme: Seeing the Whole Person

At Functional Foundations, we believe every child, teen, and adult we serve is more than their diagnosis, more than their body, and more than what others might perceive as their limitations.

Too often, people with limited motor abilities are spoken to as if they are “less than”—sometimes even spoken to like children, even if they are adults or teens. What gets missed in those moments is the truth: they are whole people with personalities, dreams, frustrations, humor, and strength.

When we slow down and shift our focus to the person, not just the diagnosis, we begin to see what's truly possible. We begin to listen differently, teach differently, and support differently. At Fun.Found., we remind ourselves daily: your body is part of you, but it does not define you.

Our hope with this newsletter is to not only update our families and supporters but to educate and inspire a broader community. If just one new reader begins to approach people with disabilities as whole, capable, and unique individuals, then this message has done its job.

Seeing the Whole Person: Nat's Story

One of our core beliefs is that every person is more than a diagnosis. Bodies may have limitations, but people are never defined by them.

Nat reflects: *"Most of the time, it was only my diagnosis when people were talking about me medically. They weren't thinking about the whole person who wants to achieve physical goals and be more independent. They were only trying to fix my limitations."*

Before coming to Functional Foundations, Nat often felt overlooked, spoken about rather than spoken to, and approached as though they were a problem to be solved. That experience left them closed off. On their first visits, Nat's PT recalls them wearing black, keeping their head down, and wondering if anything would really help.

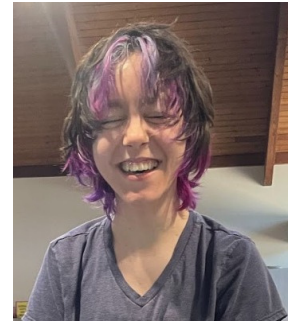
But slowly, things began to shift. Instead of focusing only on what Nat's body couldn't do, therapy here centered on who Nat was and what they wanted to achieve.

"If you really work with the body and realize this is just who I am, then you'll be able to work with me more. Instead of trying to change who I am, work with who I am and make it the best it can be."

That change in perspective created a safe space for Nat to grow—not just physically, but personally. *"I feel like learning that I could be myself and work with my limitations really made me better at physically moving toward my goals. But it also made me a more advocating person for myself. When I stepped in the doorway, I wasn't doing that at all."*

Over time, Nat blossomed. Once quiet and hesitant, they now speak confidently, perform in plays, and dream of reshaping the world of film through activism and inclusion.

"I never saw anyone like me on screen who wasn't in turmoil, having to choose between life or their disability. I want to make films that show people like me being both. I want to create a more inclusive space—and when I have my own company, I'm going to hire people like me and figure out what works for them."



Functional Foundations has been part of that transformation, but Nat is quick to emphasize that the real key is being seen, known, and treated as a whole person.

"I really love you guys. It gives me motivation to come every week. You've shown me so much grace and kindness. It's refreshing to have a safe space where I can be myself."

Their advice for the future is simple but profound: people with disabilities need safe spaces, not just more therapy exercises or checklists. They need to be asked what they want, respected for who they are, and supported as they discover their own goals.

"I really do look forward to other kids getting the care and love that they need, and seeing you guys grow. I'm glad to be a part of it, too."

Spotlight on Nat

Nat is a 19-year-old who began receiving services at Functional Foundations at the age of 16. We have been blessed to be part of Nat's journey into adulthood and have enjoyed watching them grow from a withdrawn, frustrated teenager into a very social and empowered adult.

Nat shows up consistently—even on their hardest days—and we are always ready to meet them where they are. Today, Nat is transitioning into college life with eyes set on a career in filmmaking. They dream of living more independently and are actively taking steps toward that goal.

In addition to their personal progress, Nat has volunteered to become our new Social Media Director and will take the lead on our platforms starting in September. After identifying a gap in our organization, Nat stepped forward with determination to help Functional Foundations succeed every day.

Looking ahead, Nat is hopeful for the day we will develop an adult program—so they and others can continue their journey toward independence and lifelong health well into adulthood.

Nat's story reminds us that progress is never just about stretching muscles or practicing movement. It's about unlocking confidence, dignity, and the freedom to live life fully. That is what Functional Foundations is here to do—for Nat, and for every child and family we serve.

Mauricio's Light: A Family's Journey with Functional Foundations



Mauricio's journey is part of the heart of Functional

Foundations—a reminder of why we exist, and the incredible families and children who inspire us every day.

Even though Mauricio faced many medical challenges throughout his life, his family remembers him as a boy who carried a light within him. No matter how many hospital stays he endured, at home and in the right spaces, Mauricio's joy and personality shone through.

His mother reflects: "Even though he had a lot of medical problems and spent time in the hospital, he always carried a light within him. At home, he was still a happy boy when he was with us. That's what I hold on to—his light was always here."

Finding Functional Foundations

Mauricio first came to Functional Foundations after his previous physical therapist moved out of state. His therapist believed he would benefit from the supportive and specialized environment at our clinic and sent a referral. That referral changed everything.

"What made us stay was that I saw Mauricio do so much better," his mother says. "He learned so many things. We saw an improvement in him that we hadn't seen in other clinics. I remember telling you one time, I wish we would have been with you sooner."

The welcoming atmosphere made a difference, too. For Mauricio and his family, Functional Foundations felt less like a clinic and more like a place of joy. "Coming here, it wasn't like going to a hospital appointment. It felt like a play date, an outing. He was able to show what he could do and let his personality shine."

The Lessons Mauricio Taught *Mauricio faced obstacles most of us can only imagine—shunts, infections, hospital stays that lasted weeks or months, and repeated bouts of pneumonia. Yet, through it all, he found ways to grow. "For Mauricio, even something like learning to shake his head no or lifting his hand was a huge accomplishment. Watching him work so hard taught me that if he can do it, then I can do it too. He was a brave boy."*

At Functional Foundations, our approach is rooted in seeing children as individuals with personalities, not just diagnoses. Mauricio's mom deeply valued this: "You all looked at him as a person. Doctors sometimes say kids won't be able to do something, but you focused on what he could do—and because of that, he believed he could do it too."

Continuing His Legacy Mauricio passed away too soon, but his impact continues. His mother has chosen to stay connected with Functional Foundations as a way of honoring his life and the community he was part of.



"Having Mauricio made me learn about the world of medically complex kids. It's like a whole other world not everyone gets to see. Just because Mauricio passed away, I didn't want to forget about this community. I knew I needed to be here. Being here makes me feel close to him—this was his place, his people, his community."

She even chose two special pictures of Mauricio to hang on the clinic walls. In one, he is smiling while working hard through a strengthening exercise. *"It was hard for him, but he was doing it. He looked proud of himself. That picture is Mauricio—it shows his determination and joy all at once."*

Celina's Journey Today, Celina continues to honor Mauricio's memory by being part of our community. She has been volunteering at our front desk for the past few months and will soon officially join our team as a receptionist. She brings warmth, compassion, and shared experiences with the families we serve. Having spent eight years caring for Mauricio through complex medical challenges—including two long hospital stays that each lasted close to a year—Celina embodies resilience and advocacy. Her journey reflects what many parents of children with complex needs face: sleepless nights, countless medical decisions, and ongoing uncertainty. Yet, through it all, she showed love and kindness to everyone around her. At Functional Foundations, we strive to be a source of support, not an added burden—helping families find strength, connection, and joy even in the hardest seasons.

A Lasting Gift For his family, and for everyone who knew him at Functional Foundations, Mauricio's light continues to shine. His story reminds us of the strength found in small victories, the joy of celebrating progress, and the courage of children who teach us more than we could ever teach them. *"Coming here was not just the right choice—it felt easy, it felt comfortable, like what we were supposed to do. I know Mauricio is watching me now, and I know he's happy that I'm here."*

REST IN PEACE SWEET BOY..... You are forever in our hearts Mauricio Alejandro Garcia
04/12/2017 - 05/22/2025



Message from the Founder/ Executive Director



"In my 22 years as a physical therapist, I've learned that how we communicate can be the first step in building trust — and the difference between uplifting someone or holding them back. In this month's article, I share the four principles I use to speak to the person, not just the body, and how this approach transforms my relationships with patients."

- Sophia Patel, Executive Director

How I Approach Communication as a Physical Therapist

"Our work is a partnership — I bring all of myself, and I expect you to bring all of yourself, too."

When I speak with my patients, I keep a few core principles in mind:

- **I assume competence.** No matter your age, your level of disability, or your ability to communicate in a traditional way, I believe you can understand me — and that you can communicate with me, even if it's in a nonstandard way. It's my responsibility to figure out how you are communicating and how best to communicate with you so that you can be both understood and understanding.
- **I treat you as a whole person — not a broken one.** You are not broken; you are simply built differently. My job is to help you learn how to access the world we live in and keep your body as active as possible, not to "fix" you or do everything for you.
- **I recognize your strengths.** We all have strengths and limitations. As your therapist, it's my job to see your strengths and build upon them, rather than viewing you as a list of limitations I must correct. We are on a journey of discovery together — finding ways to move and grow your skills that make you joyful and increasing your access to the world.
- **I keep it real.** I will celebrate every success with you, cheer you on, and encourage you to reach new heights. I'll also be honest — I won't reward partial effort, and I will let you know when you're not giving your best. Our work is a partnership. I bring all of myself to every session, and I expect you to bring all of yourself, too.

Grateful for
our support!

- 4 sustaining donors
- \$30,000 OCF Grant

- \$5000 DLX grant
- 40 one-time donors

- 2x \$250 Market Of Choice gift cards
- **Goods & services:** Schroeder Consultancy

Goals for the Next Two Years

Children & Families Served

- Ensure every child and family seeking services has timely access to care.

Therapy & Services

- Grow the team to include:
 - Speech & Language Services
 - Additional Occupational Therapist
 - Social worker
 - Full time receptionist
 - Full Time Medical Biller
 - Co-Director
 - Partner with Pediatric Physicians and specialists to improve access to care

Education:

- Provide on-the-job training & mentorship for clinicians
- Host continuing education classes for clinicians from renowned educators
- Host annual resource fair for families to learn about resources available in the community.

Space and Equipment

- Develop our outdoor space to create an accessible edible garden
- Add sound dampening features in our treatment spaces
- Secure funding for additional treatment tools

Social

- Host family socializing opportunities with babysitting available
- Continue to host annual fall party for families

Support

- Grow our volunteer base for outreach projects
- Add a Board Member with good financial knowledge to help guide our growth
- Add 150 sustaining donors
- Acquire adequate funding to help grow the program and dream our dreams
- Begin planning for adult transition program