

## Avory-Travis Blackwell: Thankful for His Independence

Three-year-old Avory-Travis Blackwell is a ball of energy. A student at the KenCrest West Philadelphia Center, he loves singing and dancing. He is what his mother Sabrina Cooke calls her "little hurricane."



having conversations. "I have seen such a huge improvement," Sabrina said, "KenCrest gave Avory the confidence he needed, and now he wants everyone to know he is independent."

Avory puts all of his energy to good use. He dresses himself, plays with other kids, and generally finds

ways to enjoy himself. His family members see the difference that a few months have made. "He repeats everything everyone does. He is a little gentleman. Everywhere he goes, he meets new friends."

Besides going to school, Avory enjoys creating artwork and playing with all types of toy cars. Every Saturday at their West Philadelphia home, Sabrina and her seven-year-old daughter, Destiny join Avory in cleaning the house and dancing.

"It's our family fun time. Avory loves to help me out. My three-year old son tries to be my parent," she says with a smile. "He is just so full of life."

**"KenCrest gave Avory the confidence he needed."**

Less than a year ago, Avory was referred to participate in Early Intervention at KenCrest. He was born with a unique jaw structure that limited his speech and his ability to hold a conversation. At age two, he could say simple words, but not sentences. Sabrina decided that KenCrest was a good option for her son. "I wanted my son to be able to play and talk with other kids," she said.

Avory worked with an occupational therapist and teaching specialists from KenCrest to improve his development. In just a few months, he began repeating words, identifying objects, and

### AS A MATTER OF Fact

4,935 children were served by KenCrest in Philadelphia last year

260 children were served by KenCrest in the West Philadelphia Center last year

## Peter Peterson: Thankful for the Opportunity

Most people look forward to Fridays as the end of a work week. But Peter Peterson looks forward to Friday because it is the one day he volunteers at Grand View Hospital. "Friday is the best day of the week," Peter says, "because on that day I get to give back!"

Peter began his journey at KenCrest in a group home. "But Peter wanted to live a more independent life," says Annette Hanks, his KenCrest program manager. Nine years ago, Peter moved into his own apartment and got on with his life, going everywhere in his wheelchair.

When Peter decided he wanted to try volunteer work, it took some time to find a place that was the right fit. Annette was tireless in her determination to help Peter follow his dream. Peter and Annette spent a year looking for a place that would give him an opportunity. Many places were focused more on his limitations than his abilities. "They needed to see what I really can do, instead of just talking to me," Peter explained, "I can really do a lot!"

Finally, Peter was given a chance when Grand View Hospital in Sellersville asked him to help collect packets, make sure displays in waiting rooms are in order, and distribute hospital brochures.



### AS A MATTER OF

## Fact

73 people KenCrest serves volunteer in the community

858 people from the community volunteer at KenCrest

"Peter was so thrilled to find a place that felt right for him, and a place that treated him like family," said Annette. At the hospital's recent volunteer banquet, Peter was given the prestigious Rave Award for his excellent volunteer work. So far, Peter has volunteered over 175 hours. He says he wants to give

at least 500 hours.

Peter just celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with his family and friends and continues to celebrate his life every single day. "I'm thankful in my life for finding a place where I can help people," said Peter.

**"I get to give back!"**



### FROM THE DIRECTOR



We lead off our Holiday Season by giving thanks. Every year and every day there are so many things to be thankful for at KenCrest. For me, the Thanksgiving list always begins with the extraordinary KenCrest

staff that does amazing things every day to help others. The Philadelphia Best Places to Work award that we received for the fourth consecutive year is testimony to the staff's greatness. I hope that during your Holidays you are surrounded with similar blessings. Peace.

Bill Nolan



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