

# A game changer for Daniel

As the dice are rolled, not everyone arrives on this planet as a healthy baby. Because of United Way, one young boy's game was changed. Meet Daniel.

Daniel was born premature at 29 weeks and weighed only 2 pounds. He stayed in the hospital for four months due to major health complications. He has heart problems, lung disease, is mildly autistic, developmentally delayed and has been on a feeding tube since birth. Life for Daniel is not easy.

He was adopted at five months old and began therapy at six months old. Daniel has been in therapy all of his life without any major accomplishments.

At 6 years old as a last resort, he was referred to Looper Speech and Hearing Center, a United Way program. Three years later, Daniel is a very different little boy. When he started



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therapy at Looper, he would cling to his mother and did not want to go alone. He always wanted her to be there with him. Daniel now looks forward to his therapy sessions and makes his mom wait in the waiting room. His mother has seen Daniel make major improvements since he began therapy at

Looper Speech and Hearing.

Daniel now speaks and uses verbal communication. He has also started playing on the Miracle League field and even competed in the Special Olympics. Daniel also loves to ride his bike and really loves playing outdoors. His mom believes that without the therapy he received at Looper, Daniel would not have had the confidence to do those things.

Did you know? The prevalence of speech and sound disorder in young children is about 8 percent. By the first grade, roughly 5

percent of children have noticeable speech disorders (National Institute on Health). From the Georgia Department of Human Resources we know that 1 in every 33 babies are born with a birth defect. About 1 in 1,000 pregnancies have neural tube defects, which are defects of the spine and brain. Down syndrome is a genetic condition that affects about 1 in 800, but it affects many more babies who are born to women over the age of 35.

United Way programs like Boehm Birth Defects Center, Cross Plains Community Partner, RossWoods Adult Day Services and Murray County Developmental Center all ensure that children who have special needs like Daniel have access to therapy and medical care.

Also, later in life as adults, they have safe and engaging places to work, play, sing, volunteer, play games and exercise during the day.

Thanks to more than 9,500 donors to our United Way last year, help is available right here in our community. With United Way, you don't have to choose where you want to help — your gift impacts the entire circle of life: education, basic needs and health. More than 70 United Way Community Investment volunteers annually analyze the needs of the community, making sure your gift goes where the needs are the greatest in Whitfield and Murray counties.

Daniel's story is just one example of the thousands of local lives that are improved by your investment. In 2013, United Way touched the lives of more than 67,000 people right here in our community.

Everyone deserves a chance at a good life. Be a game changer and give to United Way at [www.ourunitedway.org](http://www.ourunitedway.org).

*Amanda Burt is the president of United Way of Northwest Georgia*