

| o Spring | o 2022



# Easterseals

## TN

ALL ABILITIES. LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES.

*Effective March 1, 2022, Prospect joined Easterseals Tennessee. The new partnership will ensure members' continued care and support while enabling growth with additional programming.*

## Prospect, Inc. Merges With Easterseals Tennessee, Inc.

Easterseals Tennessee is pleased to announce its partnership with Prospect (Lebanon, TN).

Both organizations are leading providers of services and programs for individuals living with disabilities in Tennessee. Services, supports, and culture are almost identical; therefore, this joint venture creates a stronger agency that will continue to focus on the needs and efforts of all members in more communities.

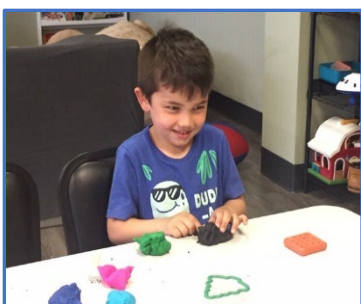
The new partnership also encourages growth and creates more opportunities to expand additional local services within the industry's changing environment. To give an example, Easterseals Tennessee recently launched a Behavior Health (Applied Behavior Analysis) program in West TN. As a result of the merger, much-needed behavioral health support will be offered to school-aged children in the Middle Tennessee community, allowing us to serve a population that is underserved.

The partnership will conduct business as Easterseals Tennessee. However, due to its reputation and recognition, the brand Prospect will remain for the near future within the community that has entrusted it for the past 55 years. The current President and CEO of Easterseals Tennessee, Tim Ryerson, continues to lead the entire organization. Andy White, the Executive Director of Prospect, is transferring a major part of his focus to the partnership's overall development, growth strategy, and communications, along with the new behavioral health program in the position of Chief Business Development Officer. White remarks, "We are excited to be joining the Easterseals Tennessee family. This partnership will provide so many opportunities in the future to add services as well as to continue to offer the same exceptional care that our members have been receiving. I am thankful for the Board of Directors at Prospect along with their decision and their support throughout the process."

Easterseals Tennessee and Prospect are better together and will move forward to create more possibilities for all abilities in communities throughout Tennessee.



## Easterseals Tennessee ABA Therapy Clinic Opens



At the beginning of March, Easterseals TN opened an ABA Therapy Clinic for children, ages 18 months -18 years, in West TN. The new clinic and its program's focus on providing skills and opportunities that foster interaction, communication, and progress in support of fuller lives in more inclusive environments.

Reaction to the new clinic from youth and their families has been tremendously positive. Within the first few days, Easterseals Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Cindy reports, "We are ecstatic to say that the clinic is now open for sessions! The kids are having a blast exploring the amazing space filled with new toys and games!"

## ABA Therapy Can Transform Children's Lives

For the past 6 months, Bella has received behavioral health from the Easterseals TN ABA therapy program. She has worked with our behavioral staff at home, in the classroom, and now at the Easterseals TN ABA clinic.

Bella's progression during this time truly epitomizes the power of inclusion, connection, and repetition in the life of an individual on the autism spectrum. When Bella first enrolled in ABA at Easterseals TN her communication skills were minimal compared to peers typical of her age. She had very little speech at all, and the words she used were mostly unintelligible to anyone except her family. She engaged in a variety of behaviors that prevented her from appropriately socializing and engaging with others. In addition, Bella was so attached to her tablet, the television, and cell phone that the behavioral staff had to start slowly incorporating her skill acquisition goals into her electronics time, in order to pair with her.

(Pairing is an essential component of ABA therapy in which teachers build rapport with a student by providing reinforcement and limiting demands. The motivational tool used to connect with the child and build a relationship is routinely her favorite enjoyment and activities. Pairing is very important as it helps to create trust between the client and his/her therapist.) In Bella's case, her Easterseals TN therapist, Heather presented therapy sessions consisting of minimal engagement that included electronics as Bella's reinforcers since they are her favorite activity. Over time, the pairing method worked wonderfully for Bella, in clinical, school, and home environments. Bella's independent vocal language has increased, which in turn has decreased her behaviors, resulting in Bella having her needs met by asking for them vocally.

At present, Bella's eye contact with adults is fantastic, as reported by Heather and her parents. She loves playing outside and is enamored with her therapist Heather. Her parents and family are ecstatic about her success.

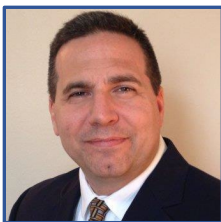
Bella's transformation illustrates that ABA therapy offers a brighter future for children as they learn functioning skills that help them become better at communicating and interacting with others.



## Easterseals Tennessee Thanks the TN General Assembly for Their Support



## President and CEO Corner



Tim Ryerson

As you can see from the photos, Easterseals TN was very fortunate to have the opportunity this year to visit in-person with over 40 Tennessee legislators on Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. During these meetings, Easterseals TN shared stories on how the organization impacts lives daily in positive ways. Also shared was the fact that as the economy and workforce remain tight, Easterseals TN has been vocal on concerns about how to retain and increase wages related to the state reimbursement rates for frontline staff. In particular, since our field serves a very vulnerable population, Tennessee must improve on short and long-term strategies to retain and compete for newly qualified workers in this industry. In Tennessee staffing is predicted to remain an uphill battle.

The visits ended with many legislators learning and being pleased with the news of the partnership with Propect, Inc. This partnership will assist in advancing the mission along with streamlining back-office operations in order to gain efficiencies and enhance support for members of the local community. Easterseals TN will continue to touch more lives throughout Tennessee with the partnership and expansion efforts.

By sharing our positive impact stories and newsletters with others in the community you will be supporting Easterseals TN. As well, any size financial donation will benefit those supported in Easterseals TN statewide programming.

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