

Children's Vision Massachusetts Story Bank

Zoe's Story



When my daughter Zoe was in 1st grade, her teacher recommended we have her eye sight checked. She said she saw Zoe struggling in reading and a few other areas. I found the request odd as Zoe had regular check-ups, and had not complained of not being able to see things or not "looking right". But of course I wanted to make sure she was OK.

Being new to our town I called our pediatrician's office for recommendations. They said she should see a pediatric eye doctor, which surprised me as I didn't think she needed a "specialist" just to get her eyes checked. I was quickly educated on the difference and importance of seeing someone who specialized in children - especially at her young age. Then to my surprise there were very few "pediatric" eye doctor in the area, and it took over 2 months to get an appointment.

When we finally met with the eye doctor, she walked us through several comprehensive tests. We discovered Zoe had astigmatism, a common condition, causing her vision to be blurry. Zoe needed eyeglasses.

A few weeks later, and after receiving them, we walked out of the office, and Zoe said "Wow!" I asked what the wow was about ... she told me things looked so different. "Everything is so clear! The trees used to look like blobs of color but now I see their shape. Everything is so pretty!"

My heart broke thinking for the past 7 years she hadn't seen things clearly - how did I miss that as her mother? Then the doctor explained to me that Zoe was born that way, and that what and how she saw, she thought was normal. Why would she think the trees would look any different than the blob she had always seen?



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We also believe Zoe's reading ability was hindered. As it was such a burden to see the text she gave up. In those early years where children learn to love reading, for Zoe it was a chore, rather than a pleasure.

Zoe continued to get her eyes checked regularly - at first every 6 months because I was told that as she grows her eyesight can also change.

Again, to my surprise within 18 months of getting her first pair of glasses, her vision had changed and a new prescription was ordered. This was in line with a "growth spurt" she'd had.

Zoe is now 14 years old and entering high school. She transitioned to contact lenses last year as she plays sports and didn't like wearing her glasses then. She said it's amazing to see how much easier it is to see the ball with her contacts. The contacts also allow her to always have "them" on during the day. As you can imagine there were days she didn't want to wear her glasses and it took an army to remind her - teachers, friends, even the bus driver!

Our experience confirms how important it is for early vision testing and intervention if needed. Upon returning to the pediatrician's office she said she was happy we took Zoe for testing as they would not necessarily catch it at a physical. She could have gone well into her elementary school years without help. Then to see how quickly her vision changed told me she, and every child, needs to have an annual eye exam.



Recent Picture of Zoe

Story By, Zoe's Mom Kim