

Brayden Pisarik is a lot of things. He's a son and a brother in a loving family. He's an avid Hawkeye fan and a young man who knows a lot about cars. He's a great example of perseverance and hard work and has a great sense of humor. Brayden is also a valued member of our Arc family. He is a shining example of the wonderful people who come through our doors each day. They make the world a better place and every day a lovely day with their shining disposition and spirit.

Here is Brayden's story...

In 2004, Karla Pisarik was just past the halfway milestone of her pregnancy with her second child when she unexpectedly went into labor. Brayden Pisarik was born at 23 weeks, 4 days gestation and weighed in at a mere 1 pound, 6 ounces. He was rushed to the NICU at St. Luke's where he stayed for 4½ months until he was strong enough to go home. While the Pisariks will never know why Karla went into early labor, they knew Brayden would be at risk for lifelong complications and special needs due to dangerous brain bleeds, low birth weight and the many other complications that come with such an early birth.

When Brayden was 2½ he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and later was also diagnosed with epilepsy. In addition to the numerous appointments and therapies Brayden was receiving, the Pisariks also became "regulars" at Witwer Children's Therapy, and it was there where Brayden's therapist connected them to The Arc of East Central Iowa.

The Arc was a game changer for The Pisariks! Brayden's parents found much-needed support through respite programs, day care and summer programs. His parents became friends with a community of families who helped them through the winding path of caring for a child with a disability.

Brayden is almost 17 years old now and he attends Prairie High School. As Brayden and his family have reflected on their time using The Arc's programs and services, they realized Brayden has participated in every program he's been eligible for at The Arc. If you mention Brayden's name to any of The Arc staff, everyone instantly reacts with a smile and a laugh. Brayden brings absolute joy everywhere he goes and his presence just ensures you're guaranteed to have a wonderful and lovely day.

Brayden's family definitely has some favorite memories of their time with The Arc. Karla reflects, *"The lifelong friendships with staff have been so valuable. The Arc March and Kernels games have been favorite outings. Our other two kids loved winning the "Super Siblings" award. One very special memory is when Brayden (all on his own) decided he was going to donate his Xbox and games to The Arc because he got a new one at home. He was SO proud! His decision to give something so valuable, shows how important his Arc community is to him."*

We invite you to join us this holiday season in support of Brayden and all the amazing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in our community by making a tax-deductible donation to The Arc. Your gift will stay right here at The Arc of East Central Iowa and will help sustain critical services for those we serve. Your gift will help individuals reach their full potential and provide many future lovely days ahead, not only for them but for everyone that they touch with their amazing spirits.

