

With a knack for numbers, Leland beats the odds

Leland Kreklewich has beaten the odds to speak.

The son of Larry and Bev Kreklewich of Melville is a successful accountant in Saskatoon, owns his own condo and drives a car.

While these may be somewhat normal for most people, what sets Leland apart is his autism.

"I feel that the issues of autism are worth being mentioned, as people with autism do have potential to contribute to society in a positive matter," says Leland in a recent email to The Melville Advance.

"However, various levels of treatment are required for individuals with autism and it can be very costly."

Leland Kreklewich, who as an employee for

Meyers Norris Penny has landed on the front page of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, had many obstacles and challenges on his path to success.

"When he was about two years old his speech and playing regressed and Public Health put us in touch with a speech therapist and we got Leland involved in the Early Childhood Intervention Program," says mother Bev who surmises her son may have contracted autism after a fever-induced convulsion.

"Public Health referred us to a specialist and we started learning all about autism," adds Larry. "One of the first things we learned is to

modify our expectations and adjust our coping skills."

Once the diagnosis was complete the Kreklewichs had to change the way they taught Leland various tasks.

"He just couldn't learn things by doing them, he

had to see someone else do something and then he would kind of mimic them," says Bev.

"One thing we really noticed was we had to try to keep Leland from getting into too much of a routine because if you had to do something differently he had trouble adjusting," adds Larry.

Leland was also a real stickler for rules because according to his parents there was only black and white with their son and never any 'grey' area.

"One time his teacher told him if he got a geography question correct he'd get to go home early and when he got the answer and still had to stay for the rest of the day he was upset somewhat," chuckles Bev who says there were struggles in parenting from time to time.

"Sometimes you felt like you failed. We didn't really have much knowledge of autism, we just knew something wasn't quite right," Bev admits. "Once you manage to get over the denial stage you get some help and it really has worked out



KREKLEWICH

for Leland and us."

Leland had a real penchant for statistics and geography in school with the former probably leading him into his current vocation where his co-workers seek him out for help from time to time.

According to Bev, having him leave home was difficult but her worries about how her son copes with everyday life have lessened. Leland, however like any child, still likes to call his parents and lean on them from time to time.

"Sometimes he'll call and ask 'is this my autism?' in regards to some matter and we'll discuss things. In Saskatoon he has a really good circle of friends and he's developing a lot of confidence. Autism is a life-long condition he's just doing phenomenally well with," adds Bev.

Leland has also reached out to parents and autistic children with a few speaking engagements and his development continues to astound his peers and parents.

"Many parents that have children with autism are very overwhelmed; and would appreciate a story showing how a person with autism can live an independent lifestyle!"

Childhood brain disorders targeted in national study

A University of Saskatchewan researcher will play a key role in a new \$5-million nation-wide study of children's brain development, leading efforts to raise public awareness of childhood brain disorders and helping to put the latest research knowledge into practice.

The NeuroDeveNet project, funded by the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) and based at the University of British Columbia, will focus initially on autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy.

for training events and workshops with media partners including the science journal Nature and the Discovery Channel.

In addition to the federal funding, the U of S Office of the Vice-President Research and the College of Medicine will contribute a total of \$145,000 to the project.

Muhajarine, who also leads the healthy children research theme for the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (a province-wide research institute that includes university, community and government

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