



LifeLab
Kids



Help our
children **GROW**

About Us

After experiencing disjointed and disorganized care for his son with autism, Jai Reddy, a successful tech entrepreneur, began designing LifeLab Kids. Jai knew that time was of the essence for his son and other children to create positive change in their lives. To that end, Jai envisioned an organization that would bring all the different therapeutic programs for children with developmental disabilities under one roof. He also believed that new programs, like technology and art therapy, could unlock even more opportunities for these uniquely talented youths. Jai was committed to offering children and their families a forward-looking, integrated model built on data-driven practices and emerging therapies that would discover a child's potential to lead a full and active life. Jai's idea became a reality in 2018 by purchasing a decommissioned church in Ferndale and hiring an integrated, specialized therapy staff. After some renovations, LifeLab Kids opened its doors on February 16, 2019.

LifeLab Kids' unique, whole-child approach unites mind, body, and spirit while integrating physical activity and mental well-being into treatment to help develop healthy habits at an early age. LifeLab Kids' programs are intended to draw out a child's strengths by tapping into their passions, to offer the same experiences that a neurotypical peer would have, and to be a safe, engaging, and inclusive community for all. LifeLab Kids' programming includes a variety of specialized physical, mental and behavioral therapies, including fitness, art, feeding and nutrition, technology/virtual reality, behavioral (ABA), music, and speech that work collaboratively to help address a child's individual needs.

LifeLab Kids remains steadfast in its goal to identify gaps in service for children with developmental disabilities and find solutions to help them lead their fullest life.

The Challenge

During 2014–2018, approximately one in six (17.3%) children had a developmental disability, and one in fifteen (5.7%) had two or more. Children with developmental disabilities often have delayed gross motor development, less proficiency in balance and coordination, and poor cardiovascular fitness compared to their peers with typical development. Children with developmental disabilities also tend to have more sedentary behaviors in part because their physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments place them at a disadvantage when playing physical activities with typical peers. Although participation may be feasible when these children are young, mainstream youth sports programs and coaches are often ill-equipped to handle the challenges of children with developmental disabilities. This aspect becomes particularly acute as the skill gap widens as the children age.

Children with developmental disabilities are also opted out of physical activity by parents who worry about the physical injuries that could occur in a non-adaptive space or program, as well as the psychological impact of non-accepting typical peers on the teams. In addition, children with developmental disabilities frequently do not have positive physical activity experiences at an individual level, as there is a lack of adaptable equipment and trained instructors to help them build skills and confidence.

Similarly, children with developmental disabilities also suffer from poor nutrition, both over and undernourishment, due to a lack of nutrition knowledge and education, sensory issues, and “picky eating.” Inadequate physical activity and nutrition are key factors for children with developmental disabilities that make them more likely to be obese and three times more likely to develop diabetes than their peers. Tragically, this trend continues as these children age as adults with developmental disabilities experience a death disadvantage, dying, on average, 20–25 years earlier than adults in the general population.

Studies around this death disadvantage phenomenon suggest that health literacy plays a significant role in the longevity of people with developmental disabilities. Health literacy can be defined as an individual’s level of knowledge, cognitive and social skills, ability to understand health information, and ability to decide to improve their health and well-being. Without giving children with developmental disabilities the education, training, and tools to improve their health literacy into adulthood, these concerning health statistics are unlikely to change.

17.3%

of children had a developmental disability between 2014–2018

1 in 15

children had two or more developmental disabilities between 2014–2018

How LifeLab Kids is Uniquely Poised to Help



From the start, LifeLab Kids has embraced non-traditional therapies, such as art, music, and technology, alongside traditional approaches like applied behavioral analysis, occupational therapy, and speech therapy to treat each child holistically.

Recognizing the critical components that physical activity and nutrition play in children with disabilities lives, LifeLab Kids created its **GROW (Growth Requires Overall WellnessSM)** program in 2020 to encourage physical activity in children with developmental disabilities. Post-pandemic, LifeLab Kids is expanding the program in dynamic and unique ways at both the Ferndale and Clinton Township locations to improve health literacy in LifeLab Kids' children by educating and empowering them to understand and control their day-to-day health decisions.

Post-pandemic, LifeLab Kids is expanding the program in dynamic and unique ways at both the Ferndale and Clinton Township locations to improve health literacy.

Sensory Garden and Therapeutic Playpark

In October 2022, LifeLab Kids broke ground at its Ferndale location on an ample outdoor space specifically designed for the needs of children with disabilities. This outdoor space features a sensory garden, developmentally adaptive play equipment, and a rubberized walking track. The playpark also includes an enclosed mixed-use court for inclusive sports such as wheelchair basketball or volleyball, tennis or racquetball, cycling, and spinning. LifeLab Kids believes this space will benefit children with developmental disabilities in many ways. The garden will provide sensory stimulation by allowing children access to unique sensory inputs during therapy, such as nature and sunlight. Adaptive and accessible equipment will allow the safe exploration of play, allowing the children increased motor activity, purposeful movement, and cognitive stimulation. Children will also find improved mental health through group participation in gardening and wellness activities with their peers, learning new skills and obtaining a sense of belonging.

With an anticipated completion date of late spring 2023, this \$1.6 million project has already won a national architecture award for its adaptive design and the City of Ferndale Project of the Year. LifeLab Kids believes its outdoor space fills the need for safe, adaptive play spaces in the community for children with disabilities and will encourage positive physical movement and memories for these children.

Design and rendering by



Ferndale Location

LOCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Sensory Garden and Therapeutic Playpark

Recreational Therapy and Introduction to Sports Programming

Feeding Therapy and Teaching Kitchen

Recreational Therapy and Introduction to Sports Programming

Understanding that free play and positive emotions around physical activity are critical to building physical movement habits, LifeLab Kids will utilize its new adaptive outdoor space to expand into recreational therapy and introduction to sports programming.

Recreational therapy uses known treatment processes and recreational activities to build and maintain physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Activities in recreational therapy help expand motor skills and reasoning abilities, build confidence and teach socialization skills. Services provided in the recreational therapy program are provided or directly supervised by a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS). These specifically trained staff members are knowledgeable about the physical limitations and needs of children with developmental disabilities. They also can adapt physical activities to each child to provide a positive, personalized experience.

Additionally, LifeLab Kids' recreational therapy staff will develop and teach an introduction to sports programs for children with disabilities in the community in the playpark. By affording these children the opportunity to participate in a group sports environment often unavailable to them through traditional youth sports programs, they will have the chance to build confidence, foster social skills, and learn teamwork while building physical and mental health.

Through positive physical activity experiences, strengthening physical skills, and providing education about the benefits of physical activity, LifeLab Kids hopes to help build a foundation for physical wellness to increase the health literacy of these children.



Ferndale Location

LOCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Sensory Garden and
Therapeutic Playpark

Recreational Therapy
and Introduction to Sports
Programming

Feeding Therapy and
Teaching Kitchen

Feeding Therapy and Teaching Kitchen

With one of the very few feeding therapy programs in the area, LifeLab Kids works with children to work through their sensory feeding issues and encourages them to learn about their bodies and food to develop a healthy diet and expand their food choices.

Feeding therapy is much more than just “teaching a child to eat.” Feeding therapy comprises two stages: first, getting food from the plate to the mouth and second, the physical and muscular issues related to eating from the mouth to the stomach. Therapists work closely with patients and their families to determine the source of the child’s difficulties and develop specific therapies to make eating more accessible and enjoyable. Additionally, the LifeLab Kids Feeding Therapy program allows children to receive comprehensive oral and nutritional care. LifeLab Kids is experiencing an increased demand for feeding therapy services as these issues also impact children without diagnosed disabilities.

Expanding the feeding therapy program through the kitchen renovation will allow more children to build healthy nutrition habits and become active participants in strengthening their whole bodies through food.

At present, LifeLab Kids cannot utilize its ample kitchen space in Ferndale for the program due to its traditional design, which is not adaptable, safe, or accessible for children with special needs. **By redesigning the existing kitchen, LifeLab Kids will create a group kitchen environment designed specifically for children with developmental disabilities and accessible for those with mobility issues.** In addition, the kitchen will be functional to teach life skills and equipped with audio and visuals to aid with therapy and education. Once the renovation is complete, LifeLab Kids will expand its feeding therapy program capacity by mentoring families in the community, hosting seminars, and training other professionals seeking feeding certifications.



Ferndale Location

LOCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Sensory Garden and Therapeutic Playpark

Recreational Therapy and Introduction to Sports Programming

Feeding Therapy and Teaching Kitchen

Clinton Township Location

Free Play and Exercise Lab Renovation

LifeLab Kids was able to open its second location in Clinton Township in 2022. Once a commercial space, LifeLab Kids has been able to transition offices into bright, welcoming therapy spaces. To bring recreation and physical therapy to the Clinton Township location, LifeLab Kids is looking to renovate the large lower level of its existing space into a Free Play and Exercise Lab. In addition to adding accessibility aids, such as a lift for children who use wheelchairs, LifeLab Kids will have adequate space for developmentally adaptive play equipment and group play.

Recreational Therapy and Group Play Programming

Much like the Ferndale location, LifeLab Kids will utilize its renovated Free Play and Exercise Space to expand into recreational therapy and introduction to sports programming at the Clinton Township location.

Feeding Therapy and Teaching Kitchen

The addition of the Clinton Township location allows LifeLab Kids to expand its feeding therapy program to Macomb County. Currently, the challenges of the Clinton Township office kitchen are akin to those of Ferndale; both are inaccessible and inadequate for training and hands-on use by children with developmental disabilities. Renovating the kitchen space will create a thoughtfully designed environment for LifeLab Kids children to receive feeding therapy and learn hands-on nutrition skills.

LOCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Free Play and Exercise Lab Renovation

Recreational Therapy and Group Play Programming

Feeding Therapy and Teaching Kitchen



How you can help LifeLab Kids GROW

As a result of the education and treatment of children with disabilities in the areas of physical activity and nutrition, the health literacy of these children will get the attention and dedication it deserves. Through the generosity of compassionate individuals like you, your gift towards the LifeLab Kids GROW program will lead to lasting change in the overall wellness and longevity of these children's lives. The following giving opportunities are available:

FERNDALE - Sensory Garden and Therapeutic Playpark

- Construction of multi-sports court and rubberized track
- Landscaping for the sensory garden

FERNDALE - Recreational Therapy and Introduction to Sports Programming

- Initial onboarding of recreational therapists and recreational technicians
- Adaptive sports equipment

FERNDALE - Feeding Therapy and Kitchen Renovation

- Complete renovation of kitchen and community gathering space to meet accessibility and design needs of children with developmental disabilities
- Renovation of kitchen space to better utilize existing space will also expand LifeLab Kids' art therapy program
- Initial onboarding of additional feeding therapists

CLINTON TOWNSHIP - Exercise Space and Kitchen Renovation

- Renovation of existing unused space to create recreational space
- Purchase of adaptive play equipment
- Renovation of the kitchen to create an accessible learning environment
- Addition of a lift to allow access for those children in wheelchairs to lower level

CLINTON TOWNSHIP - Recreational Therapy and Group Play Programming

- Initial onboarding of recreational therapists and recreational technicians

SUSTAINABILITY

LifeLab Kids has experienced dynamic growth since opening its doors in 2019. We now seek additional funding to expand program capacity, reduce our waitlist, and create vibrant, new initiatives to fill gaps in service for children and young adults with developmental disabilities. LifeLab Kids' core operations are financially self-sufficient through our billable services, but operational funding does not cover our expansion plans.



LifeLab Kids

Oakland County Location
3178 Hilton Road, Ferndale, MI 44820

Macomb County Location
42450 Hayes Road, Clinton Township, MI 48038

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