



## Shawn

Shawn arrived 9 weeks premature, spending the first weeks of his life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. As soon as he was strong enough, Shawn was placed into the loving arms of his CHSofNJ foster mother, Donna. At first, nothing about this tiny newborn seemed unusual; Shawn seemed to be thriving, and both his foster family and the CHSofNJ social workers involved in his case were certain he would be easily placed into an adoptive family. But as the weeks went on, Shawn struggled to meet even the simplest milestones.

When other babies his age could roll over, crawl, and sit up, Shawn was unable to even lift his head. He began experiencing seizures, and the medication needed to control them made him lethargic. Shawn struggled with digestive problems and significant pain on the days he could find the strength to eat. Respiratory issues prevented him from playing like other children, and a neurological impairment claimed the sight from his beautiful, soulful eyes. Before he could celebrate his second birthday, Shawn was battling a list of challenges, medical conditions, prescriptions, and treatment plans.



CHSofNJ worked closely with Shawn's foster family to ensure they were prepared to foster a baby as medically fragile as Shawn, offering special training, support, and critical medical equipment. We arranged for reliable in-home nursing care, recruited talented pediatric specialists including a neurologist, ophthalmologist, geneticist, gastroenterologist, and speech, occupational, and physical therapists for Shawn's exceptional health team.

Our skilled social workers noticed similarities between Shawn's condition and that of his older brother, who had been placed in CHSofNJ foster care as a newborn thirteen years earlier. Shawn's biological brother had been diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder shortly after birth, and sadly, succumbed to the disease at only two years old. Our staff reviewed old files and shared important information with Shawn's expert team of medical professionals, leading to more informed medical decisions. Eventually, Shawn was diagnosed with the same terminal genetic condition that had taken his brother's life.

Everyone involved refused to let this sweet boy's life be defined by medical conditions and developmental disorders. While his medical team worked to treat his symptoms and ease his discomfort, our foster family provided nurturing care. We continued to search for the loving adoptive family that would welcome Shawn despite his health issues and shortened life-expectancy. Our nationwide search led us to Rebekah and Patrick, who were willing and able to provide the love and specialized care Shawn needed. The family was thoroughly educated on Shawn's condition and trained in how to care for his serious medical and developmental needs. Having already adopted one medically fragile child, Rebekah and Patrick felt confident they could meet Shawn's special needs. They adopted Shawn to ensure the rest of his days would overflow with love.

Now 2.5 years old, despite his debilitating condition, Shawn experiences joy and love each day of his life thanks to our CHSofNJ foster and adoptive families. Shawn's story may not be a traditional happy ending adoption, but helping this little boy to know comfort, joy, and overwhelming love is certainly a happy ending, nonetheless.

Since 1894, CHSofNJ has been saving children's lives and building healthy families, because we believe that every child deserves a safe and loving home. Your donation today will ensure that we can make a difference in another child's life. Please help us continue to be there for all of our babies.