

Know Me

NAME *Tristan, Max and Cameron*

PASSION *Sports*

Our Story

Meet Tristan, Max and Cameron Broom. They are brothers who share a lot of things: their parents, Sean and Jodi, love of sports, and being involved in community. They also have something else in common: Autism. Each of the boys has a different personality, likes, dislikes, talents...and their autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is different, too.

“Autism isn’t a cookie-cutter disorder,” said the boys’ mom, Jodi Broom. “Like typical siblings each boy has his own strengths and weakness so we try lots of different things to support them. What works for one person doesn’t always work for the other. It’s a learning process every day.”

In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with ASD; 1 in 151 are girls and 1 in 37 are boys. Boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls. Historically, ASD has been called autism, Asperger’s disorder and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, but now physicians only use ASD.

For the Brooms, though, getting a diagnosis wasn’t easy. In the 1990s, when the boys were born, autism was still a relatively unknown disorder and was classified as a mental retardation. This made it difficult to get the boys the support they needed from doctors and schools, as well as insurance coverage for services they needed.

Max, 27, Cameron, 24, and Tristan, 19, were all diagnosed early thanks to their parents’ persistence and intuition.



Early Intervention is Key

"It's so important to get an accurate diagnosis early because it allows the child to get the services and therapy he needs right away," said Jodi. "For parents, it allows you to start building on foundation skills that is imperative for later on." That's where early intervention services come into play.

"When Max was 18 months old he wasn't achieving milestones. He had little to no verbalization, issues with fine motor skills, and was very timid around strangers and scared of men with hats and beards," remembered Jodi. "As first time parents, we looked to our doctor for guidance. She was never concerned. Always telling me "He is just delayed. Don't worry he will catch up". As he continued missing milestones, I just knew something wasn't right."

The Broom's sought a second opinion and enrolled Max in a Stark County Integrated Preschool through Plain Local Schools where a school psychologist evaluated him and validated their concerns.

At the same time, the Broom's had another baby boy, Cameron. During his first year, the Broom's began seeing developmental delays and immediately got Cameron involved with early intervention support and then on to Eastgate Early Childhood and Family Center preschool classes.

Five years later, the Brooms welcomed the arrival of their third boy, Tristan. And, once again, they saw the all too familiar signs of autism. He too got support through early intervention services and attended Eastgate's Autism Program for preschool.

Desperate for a professional advocate, the Broom's turned their Primary Care Physician who connected them with a developmental behavioral pediatrician at Akron Children's Hospital.

With a professional advocate on board, the Broom's continued to work with their boys at home to strengthen their academic, social and communication skills. By the early 2000s, the Brooms had built a strong working relationship with their home school district, Plain Local Schools.

"With Max and Cam we "suggested, encouraged and assisted" teachers and administrators to think out of the box. Information concerning Autism was slow in coming, therefore schools too were slow with supports for students with autism and other disabilities." said Jodi. Sean and I always came prepared for each IEP (Individual Educational Program) meeting with ideas that would help the boys succeed. Each boy laid the groundwork for the next. By the time Tristan got to school, administrators, teachers and coaches were "on board" and ready to help.



But as Jodi can attest, getting their boys successfully through to graduation wasn't the end, but instead a question of what's next. Support, typically gotten through school administrators and teachers, had to shift to Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities once they reached adulthood. All three brothers currently have a Level 1 waiver to help fund some of the services they need to continue to do the things they want to do in the community, like transportation using SARTA or Non-Medical Transportation, social outings, sports participation and employment support.

"We need to figure out how to make kids with autism productive adults. We need to educate them so they not only graduate, but also have a career path," said Jodi. "By the age of 14, families should be talking about and preparing for after high school graduation / transition with their school districts. Some of these conversations should center on: living as independent as possible, community employment and how to utilize "needed" services and agencies within the community. Information about guardianship, Social Security, BVR/OOD, DD services and life skills are so important and need to be discussed early because once they become adults we (parents) lose our voice unless needed supports are set up."

And while Jodi and Sean have helped the boys meet milestones and prepare for their future, the Broom's also find ways to support their boys' personal interests.

"Years ago the developmental pediatrician continued to tell us to find something each boy liked – sports, photography, whatever – and told us to get involved and build on it," said Sean. "The opportunities that sports teams, the schools and coaches have given our boys over the years really helped them grow personally and improved their confidence."

Meet Max

Max, who is athletic, found his niche managing GlenOak's varsity and junior varsity basketball and football teams in high school. He also played in the Canton Challenger Baseball League and is very active athlete for Stark Public Special Olympics basketball and softball teams. Throughout middle and high school, Max earned awards and praise for his positive attitude and athletic abilities. As an adult, he continues to be a hard worker who isn't afraid of responsibility, as he currently works two part time jobs, Carlo's Trattoria and Walther's Twin Tavern. Max also volunteers for the football and basketball programs at Walsh University in his spare time.



Meet Cameron

Cameron, who has always shown strength with numbers and enjoys academics, found his comfort zone running cross-country and track for Glen Oak High School all four years as well as a manager for their varsity basketball team. Cameron participated in the Canton Challenger Baseball League and is an athlete for Stark Public Special Olympics where he participates in many sports. When he graduated, he ranked in the top half of his class and earned the distinction of receiving GlenOak's Outstanding Male Senior Award. Upon graduation Cameron entered the Project Search Program where he interned at the Aultman Health Foundation. He also completed an internship at Canton City Hall and was a Participant and a Mentor for the Ohio Governor's Council on People with Disabilities in 2014 and 2015. where he learned to advocate for himself and others with disabilities. Since 2017, Cameron has worked at the Wendy's restaurant in Washington Square. Cameron's hobbies include computers, social media, traveling and he volunteers for GlenOak Summer Baseball as a scorekeeper, pitch counter and concessions stand worker.

Meet Tristan

Tristan, who has always had a keen sense of awareness, excels in golf, fishing and bowling. During high school, Tristan was part of the Glen Oak Golf team, a sport he loves. Like his brothers, Tristan also plays for the Stark Public Special Olympics Royal Knights, paying basketball and running track. Tristan attended the Special Olympics Region 10 Unified Golf Tournament where he and his partner placed 1st in their level. Outside of the sports arena, Tristan attends Pegasus Farm vocational program and NDSI, where he is working on vocational training at Kraus Pizza.

On Parenting Three

"Some things have worked and some things haven't, and that's okay...it's all about trial and error. It's how we learn," said Sean. "The only time we really fail is when we don't try. All our parenting to this point has been about changing and adapting to what each boy needs."

Jodi and Sean are proud of their boys' accomplishments and know there's more to come. "I think stereotypes (about autism) are being crushed every day because of what these kids are proving they can do."

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Know Stark DD



**Stark County Board of
Developmental Disabilities**

Supporting People with Disabilities & Their Families