

Three Darien High School Seniors Raise Funds for Local Toddlers With Developmental Delays

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Three recent graduates of Darien High School -- Lauren Larizza, Owen Stevens and Olivia Taylor -- spearheaded a project to support STAR, Inc. as part of their senior internship with The Community Fund of Darien.

With their involvement in the Youth Community Fund allocations, these intelligent, kind and proactive interns were aware of [STAR](#)'s funding shortfall to complete an important project to benefit toddlers in our community.

-- This article combines an announcement from STAR Inc. Lighting the Way, along with the text of the fundraising appeal from the students' project.

They were inspired to create and manage a project on The Impact Vine -- an online giving platform founded by The Community Fund of Darien to support local nonprofits. Their mission was to raise an additional \$750 to purchase iPads and learning software for STAR's Birth to Three program.

Thanks to their design, social media outreach and follow-up [this project](#) has been successfully funded and the new assistive technology will help toddlers with intellectual and developmental delays to improve vocabulary and speech, foster non-verbal communication, learn sign language, develop point and touch skills and to learn shapes, colors and numbers in preparation for preschool.

Here's What They Said on Impact Vine

From the [fundraising page](#) for the project on [ImpactVine.org](#):

We are 3 seniors at Darien High School and we're crowdfunding a new iPad with software for STAR's Birth To Three Early Intervention program for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

STAR was looking to purchase two iPads last fall, but could only afford one, so we're raising money to purchase the second one for them!

iPads provide symbol-supported communication applications that give voices to children who cannot speak and provides critical learning benefits. Current research shows that early intervention services are most effective in the first three years due to increased plasticity of the brain.

Potential benefits of an additional iPad include improved cause/effect skills, engaging kids who don't engage, fostering non-verbal communication, teaching sign language, learning how to make choices, developing point and touch skills, matching skills, and improvements in communication vocabulary and speech.

STAR has three iPads that are shared by approximately ten therapists on a sign-out basis. STAR provides services to over 600 infants, children, and adults. More specifically, the Birth to Three Program supports approximately 60-80 children per month and over 200 children per year. About 74% of STAR's clients are in the low/moderate income level.

It is critical that STAR therapists have access to iPads and communication software during client visits. An additional iPad will open new communication and learning opportunities for each child served by STAR; it will allow them to attain developmental milestones and require less special services as they enter traditional pre-school.

STAR has recently been impacted by reductions in state funding as well as a reorganization of Birth To Three services.

STAR needs YOUR help to purchase a new iPad and allow the Birth to Three Program to make the biggest impact that it can on over 200 young children every year. Please help these children develop the skills they need to be successful and own the future that they deserve!

- **STAR has also added [another project](#) on the [Impact Vine website](#). This project seeks to raise \$1,500 for ten scholarships to allow low-income STAR clients to attend local art, dance, music, cooking and job skills training classes.**

Darienite

News for Darien

<https://darienite.com>

About STAR

STAR has served Darien families since it was established in 1952 by parents who believed that children with intellectual and developmental disabilities were entitled to the same basic opportunities as other children.

Today, [STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way](#) is a not-for-profit organization that has grown to include a full array of services for over 600 individuals with disabilities, from birth to their senior years and their families.

STAR's mission is to create opportunities for individuals to live full lives with independence, freedom of choice and personal growth by providing support, services and advocacy.

They inform and encourage the community to recognize and appreciate the value of all individuals. Services include early intervention services for infants and preschoolers; family and residential supports; customized job assessment and training; recreation and leisure activities; high school transition and transportation.