

More Than Skin Deep

Michael's 2014 video to raise awareness of communications disorders struck a chord worldwide. Because thanks to your support of ChildVision, his story is more than skin deep...

A 22-year-old Vocational Education student who has been part of the ChildVision family since the age of 13, Michael isn't one to let life's challenges hold him back. He's faced many.

Just one of those things

Michael has Apert Syndrome – so rare that only twenty people in Ireland have it. Born with a fused skull, fingers and toes, a second surgery to allow his brain to develop left Michael with no

vision. "His dad walked up to me with tears in his eyes and just said, 'He's blind.'" Mum Marian will never forget the day.

It was his family – and the love of a dynamic teacher early on – who started Michael on his way. "His brothers and sisters didn't react at all to Michael's appearance, it was just one of those things" says Michael's mum. "They just loved him. To

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My Life Teaching Blind Children

Audrey Farrelly's life teaching blind preschoolers is like nothing you'd imagine. And it would be nothing, if not for you...

Her students are aged from birth to just six. All are blind. Most have additional disabilities, and weighty diagnoses. Many need donor-funded equipment to let them move or change position. Virtually all need help, often from a medical nurse, to eat. But... is that *singing* you hear?

Yes, there is singing

Welcome to ChildVision's Preschool, headed by Audrey Farrelly. "When we sing hello to each child at the start of each day, we get big smiles." Audrey herself smiles at the thought. "We set up the preschool 15 years ago. Not one person has left our team of teachers and therapists so we are really close knit. We have to be as our work can throw big emotional highs and lows."

Play with a purpose

"We encourage the children regardless of their disability to be as independent as possible in their play," Audrey explains. "Each will have a stander or a seat or walker fitted to them. And the massage mat, bubble tubes and special computers, all of that helps them to operate without any vision. Even the SWITCH-accessible toys bring stories to life through non-visual mediums. If story time is about a windy day, the children would



"When we sing hello to each child at the start of the day, we get big smiles," says Audrey Farrelly, head of the ChildVision Preschool.

Parents may have come out of the hospital after being told their child is blind. They're just sitting in the car, crying. I ask them to come as soon as it suits...The diagnoses are getting more complex, and due to the incredible need our preschool again has a waiting list. But I always try and see how we can help.

have a fan they could turn off and on to feel the breeze on their faces. It's all provided by our donors, and it's vital."

Vital because this is play with a purpose. For example, a five-year-old who learns she can modify her environment by changing position to reach for a

toy or by using her head to control a switch has a way to connect with the world, which for these multi disabled blind children will be very important indeed.

Highs and lows

Preschool runs from 10am to 1pm. For Audrey this is "the best time, when you see the good things children do – like reaching out to touch something for the first time. It doesn't sound huge, but for these children, it is."

Before and after school hours is when Audrey often finds her most heartbreaking challenge, "getting a phone call from a new parent whose child needs help straight away. We just get calls out of the blue. Parents may have come out of the hospital after being told their child is blind. They're just sitting in the car, crying. I ask them to come as soon as it suits so we can talk. The diagnoses are getting more complex, and due to the incredible need our preschool again has a waiting list. But I always try and see how we can help."

To meet Audrey, her team and the students at ChildVision's Preschool – open with the help of your generous support – ring Ruth on **01 837 3635** for a tour.



To disabled blind children and their families, you are a hero.

Three Precious Lives You Touched in 2014

In 2014 you learned their stories. Then through ChildVision you rallied to help. Share in their Christmas family updates on Gabby, Tom and Ava...



GABRIELLE ROSE sadly had to be hospitalised once again at Christmas. To the delight of all she still got her visit from Santa, Mrs. Claus and the elves. She's since returned home and mum reports that Gabby is "recovering very well. She starts equine therapy this year and our family are doing a ChildVision course to help encourage Gabby to communicate. She's already responding!"



AVA, although young is totally blind "the smells of Christmas were so exciting for her, and the treats. She felt all the presents, the whole time squealing with happiness!" Not long ago you may recall Ava's mum saying "thank you for giving us our family back." That joy was clearly evident at Christmastime.



TOM was born with the unimaginably rare disorder Trisomy-7p. At four years of age he's just had to undergo a lumbar puncture – we're hoping he'll be back at ChildVision soon so he can continue the equine therapy your kind donations helped him to begin in 2014.

To send your love and well wishes to Tom, post them to us using the Freepost envelope enclosed. We'll be glad to forward them on for you.

Skin Deep...

continued from cover
this day his oldest sister Aoife is like a second mother to him!"

More than skin deep

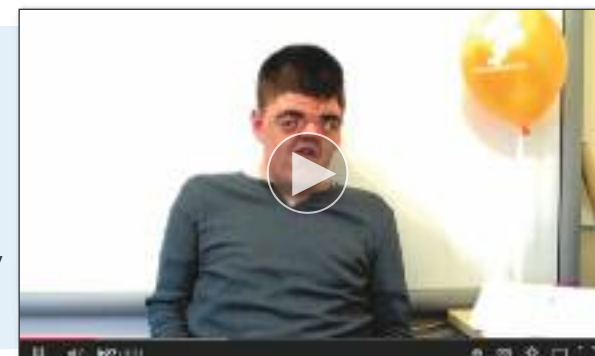
So when the International Communication Project (ICP 2014) was introduced to the Vocational Education students here at ChildVision, it's no surprise that Michael was first in line. He volunteered to develop a video that would speak not only on behalf of himself, but for his peers and others around the world for whom communication is equal parts struggle and triumph.

Michael knows that triumph better than most, a direct result of your kind donations. Weekly mobility sessions here on campus mean that Michael, who is totally blind, can travel independently from our vocational classrooms to the primary school. He's developed his literacy, IT and braille skills through the ChildVision library

and resource teacher. And as you'll see in the YouTube video, speech and language therapy helped Michael's stammer all but disappear.

More than skin deep? Thanks to you, Michael's "big heart and loving nature" will never be locked inside him – they're beautiful gifts he can bring to the world.

See Michael's YouTube advocating for people with communication disorders!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuoiBI-fOZM> Or search for "ChildVision Ireland" on YouTube.



Thanks a million for your love and generosity.

Services You Support: Music Therapy

When John plays music with the therapist, he has a huge smile on his face and often laughs with joy. His attention has increased and he is motivated to communicate his world through the music...



Thanks to your support, at ChildVision our music therapist presently works with children who have little or no verbal communication. Our goal is to one day offer music therapy to all our children, and recently Altan, Julie Feeney, our music teacher Catherine McEvoy and our very talented students Amy Campbell, Ashleigh Fagan and Robert Creed joined us at a benefit to try and raise the funds needed. To give to the music therapy project, use the reply form included with this newsletter. Thank you! 🍷

A legacy to bloom in their lives —

Roses for Your Love, Everlasting

When you leave a gift in your will to ChildVision we'll plant a rose with your name in our gardens – a living symbol of your love and our gratitude for your legacy that will bloom for Ireland's disabled blind children long after your lifetime.

To have a confidential chat about bequests in your will or to request more information, ring Ruth on 01 837 3635.



ChildVision

National Education Centre for Blind Children
Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

- ☎ Telephone: 01 837 3635
- ✉ Email: info@childvision.ie
- 🌐 Website: www.childvision.ie
- 📘 Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChildVisionIreland
- 🐦 Twitter: [@childvisionvi](https://twitter.com/childvisionvi)

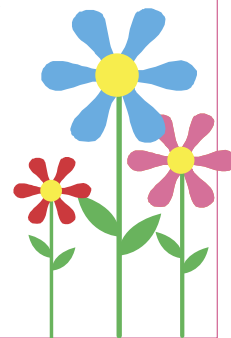
You're Invited to a June Garden Party

What: A family garden party with activities and lots of fun, as our thanks to you!

When: Saturday, 13th June from 12 noon until 4pm

Where: ChildVision,
Grace Park Road,
Drumcondra,
Dublin 9
(enter via Gate 3)

Who: All welcome –
tell your friends



How to Host a Springtime Tea

See the soft blush of spring – and tour the inspiring work you support – when you host tea for you and your friends at the beautiful ChildVision gardens and campus in Drumcondra. Includes the new pre-school as well!

Minutes from Dublin Centre off the M50. **Ring 01 837 3635** for details... we hope to see you soon. 🍷



Ring 01 837 3635 to host a complimentary tea and tour of ChildVision. The first buds of spring await!