

Kids On The Move celebrates 29 years, 2,300 alumni at Living Planet Aquarium



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OREM – A milestone of sorts, more than 2,300 alumni from Kids On The Move visited the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium Thursday evening.

For more than 29 years, KOTM has supported the development of young children and their families, with a focus on children with physical and developmental disabilities and delays.

“While we’ve gone through tumultuous times, I believe the greatest challenge during the early years came from those who said ‘It can’t be done. You’ll never be able to enhance the lives of children with profound disabilities. You are wasting your time,’” said Scott Bean, KOTM executive officer.

Decades later and after helping about 25,000 families, Bean said those early doubters should ask the thousands of parents who devoted their time working for and with children they love.

“Thankfully, we also had some great community partners who believed in what was happening here,” he said.

One of those partners is Mass Mutual Financial Group, a Fortune 100 Company.

“For the past 10 years, Mass Mutual as a company has focused on the community of special needs,” said Sarah Nitta, a member of the company’s professional SpecialCare Planning Team. “We are the only financial firm in the nation that does that.”

With her team’s help and through a foundation grant provided through Loveland Living Planet Aquarium, KOTM was able to have the special Living Planet Aquarium party free for the families and alumni, usually a \$64.75 cost for a family with two parents and three children.

Aaron and Tiffany Shill of Lehi were at the event with their three sons and daughter. Two-year-old Adalynn Shill is a KOTM alumna.

Tiffany Shill said they have had a fantastic experience with KOTM.

“They were able to help my daughter stand up and walk,” she said. “She never rolled, she never crawled, she never laid on her belly.”

The therapists came into their home and treated Adalynn Shill in her home instead of having

mom pack all the medical equipment and her daughter to an office.

Emilee Wagner brought her two daughters and mother, Carole Hyde, with her to the aquarium.

“I love the way they do things for these kids that they might not have otherwise had like this,” Hyde said.

After the medical bills are paid, in the Wagners' case \$20,000 a year, some families can't afford niceties like museums, resorts or special attractions. KOTM and MassMutual help families feel a part of a bigger community and help them find answers for their particular situation.

And then there are the kids.

“What I love most about KOTM is getting to rub shoulders with people – our very skilled staff as well as our families – who sacrifice so much on behalf of special small ones who will almost certainly fall through the cracks of society without helping hands to nourish their little souls,” Bean said.

Another side benefit is seeing how many talents and gifts these children possess that might not have surfaced without therapies to magnify them, he said.

“The best example I can give you is the one I'm most familiar with – my own daughter. My wife and I walked through the doors of KOTM 21 years ago with no clue as to why our child had no language and multiple daily tantrums,” Bean said.

She was diagnosed with autism. KOTM helped address her challenges.

“That 2-year-old girl got married this past spring to a wonderful young man,” Bean said. “Our journey won't be over for a long time, but sometimes it's really difficult to foresee what's possible when you're just getting started.”

Kids On The Move

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