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‘He’s individual and special, just like any kid’



Mum’s touching words as her autistic son stars in Jeans for Genes campaign

By Nicola Conville

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Today sees the launch of the 25th anniversary of Jeans for Genes Day, and seven-year-old Max is one of the stars of the new advertising campaign.

Max was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, global developmental delay, and ADHD when he was just two years old.

Mum Lorel describes the moment she realised Max may have had developmental delays.

“I was at a playgroup and another little boy Max’s age started telling me all about his truck... and I realised that Max could never have that conversation,” she explains. “He wasn’t talking like the other kids.”

Shortly after that, one of Max’s teachers told her she also thought there may be something wrong, and Lorel made an appointment with a paediatrician.

“The hardest thing was hearing that there is no treatment or cure for it,” Lorel explains. “Initially I thought ‘maybe he’ll recover, and I won’t have to tell anyone.’”

Max went through early intervention therapies and saw psychologists on a weekly basis. He continues to do a lot of home-based therapy and five years on, he is thriving and is attending a mainstream school.

“His teacher is really supportive and helps him out a lot,” Lorel says. “He has amazing friends including his best friend James. Max just follows him around everywhere – James helps him out and shows him what to do.”

Despite the challenges the family have faced, Lorel says Max is doing great and has “a wonderful personality.”

“What people need to understand is that [an autism diagnosis] does change your whole plan for life and you do worry, but Max is individual and special, as is every kid.”

Lorel's advice to parents of autistic children is to accept them for who they are and take things one step at a time.

“Educate yourself as a parent, read helpful books and do your research, but don’t get overly worried about fixing everything,” she says.

“Just do your best and appreciate all the good moments along the way.”

For more information visit jeansforgenes.org.au