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Before & After School - Imprints Cares Is First On My List!

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By Lisa Cristobal

I can't express enough about how much Imprints Cares means to my family.

My story is best told as I look back on our journey-relocating to

this area in 2010-moving from a close knit Northern community in New Jersey—to what we hoped at the time-to a similar Southern community in the Winston-Salem.

As an older mom—with two children in their early twenties and enjoying my new chapter with my youngest, Eddie—my first goal in our move was to find Eddie an elementary school with a strong before and after school program. He was entering kindergarten on the heels of a wonderful experience during his preschool years so I didn't want to lose the momentum of his excitement to learn and develop socially. Our family-okay me!—is a little more protective of Eddie. He was born four months premature and had to endure open heart surgery—this was a hard time for all of us. So finding a nurturing and safe environment in those extended hours while I was at work was crucial.

As I checked out schools and their options for before and after school programs—I was drawn to [Imprints Cares](http://www.imprintscares.org/) (<http://www.imprintscares.org/>). What set them apart—they were on site at the school, hired school teachers and had a structured program including homework time, fitness activities and enrichment fun. And, they offered Summer Cares learning for kids to keep their minds and bodies sharp—not missing a beat and ahead of the curve when school starts again. I was hooked—knew this would provide Eddie a well rounded day, in one place, with familiarity of the same teachers and classmates before, during and after school.

So off Eddie went—each morning affectionately greeted by an Imprints Cares teacher calling him by name, making him feel special. At the end of each day, he was excited to share with me what he learned in school and at Imprints Cares. Happiness as I've come to experience the consistency of the Imprints Cares program-his homework is always done and his energy well tapped! This has made for enjoyable family time in the evenings without the bed time hour wrangling as he actually asks me, "Is it bedtime yet?" Even better—Eddie wakes up refreshed and eager to see his friends and teachers—focused and with a plan.

As a mom—it is comforting to see how the Imprints Cares team takes the time to know your child, discover their talents and potential and discover ways to expand them. With

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Eddie—they found he loves to take charge. As he is now getting ready to enter 3rd grade—they see the little ones look up to him. Miss Janet will say “We need your help Eddie. The younger kids will learn from you as you lead by example.” Creating such an open environment so the kids work together, share ideas and become role models for each other—beyond the academics as they embrace social and emotional development.

Everyone in the Imprints Cares program—from the administration to teaching staff—are on the same page in partnering with children and their parents for success. Understanding it is about the whole family—making this connection. They communicate with families on a regular basis sharing weekly highlights and plans—Eddie can’t wait to see what is coming up next! And I know I’ll get the follow-up on his progress. Betty West, the Director, and Janelle Gibbs, the Administrator—are also so easy to reach. When they answer their phone, I feel their warmth as they recognize me and include a little something about my family in their greeting. You aren’t a number—you are one of their family members.

For us—this was even more apparent when we learned our NJ hometown family and friends were hit by Hurricane Sandy. Eddie took this hard and the Imprints Cares team hugged him even tighter—compassionate and taking extra time and support guiding him forward. Checking in with me—so I wouldn’t worry at work. Fueling his advocacy as he took to Facebook and started a fundraising campaign—raising an estimated \$5485 for his hometown. We are family.

And something I don’t miss—not hearing him say “I’m bored!” Instead he looks to the future and says “I’m going to Harvard!”

Imprints Cares has been pivotal to Eddie’s life as he grows into a



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successful adult. Fundamental to our lives. Imprints Cares before and after school program has had a positive impact on his grades, his work habits, his social skills, his fitness, his happiness—driving Eddie’s passion to do more. He can’t wait for 3rd grade!

This is why Imprints Cares is first on my list! Join me and enjoy the same experience for your child.

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