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## Family thankful for health department's routine vision screenings

Ithaca- Shortly before Christmas in 2009, Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) Hearing and Vision Technician Lisa Smith conducted a routine vision screening on first-graders Brianna and Brendan Mikesell. Both children failed.

When Smith returned one week later to the Gratiot County school to conduct a re-test, they both failed again.

Brendan's mom, Lisa Mikesell, was informed that her children had failed both screenings, and quickly made an appointment for both children to see an optometrist. "I just figured they both needed glasses and it would be an easy fix," said Mikesell. But while Brianna did indeed need glasses to correct her vision problem, an easy fix wasn't meant to be for her brother. The optometrist's exam revealed a more serious problem; Brendan's optic nerves were swollen, which typically indicates the presence of a brain tumor. Brendan was immediately sent to his primary care physician for further examination.

The following day Brendan underwent a MRI scan. Thankfully, a brain tumor was ruled out. "We were so incredibly relieved to find out he didn't have a tumor, as the doctors suspected," said Mikesell, "But we were still baffled as to what was causing his condition."

The next several weeks were a blur for the Mikesell family as they were referred from one doctor to another, in search of an answer.

Brendan saw an ophthalmologist, a Pediatric Neurologist, and finally a Pediatric Neuro Ophthalmologist at Michigan State University (MSU). But this time they had a diagnosis: idiopathic intracranial hypertension (pressure around the brain). "We are still unsure why he has this condition, but are so thankful that we have a diagnosis," Mikesell said.

A year after the abnormality was found, the Mikesell's continue to travel to MSU every 3-4 months to see the Pediatric Neurologist. "We are taking a conservative approach at this time," she continued. "Luckily, his vision hasn't gotten any worse."

Mikesell and her husband, Brian, are thankful that MMDHD provides routine vision and hearing screenings to school-age children within the district (Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties). According to Kim Singh, Health Officer for MMDHD, school-based hearing and vision screenings are two of eight state mandated local public health services performed by health departments throughout the State.

"If it weren't for MMDHD, and technicians like Smith, we wouldn't have found out about Brendan's condition until much later," said Mikesell. "We are no longer panicking at this point, and are just relieved that he is now under a doctor's care."

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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