

More Than Golf: Twin Brothers Excel with Help from AmFam Championship

Introduction:

The American Family Insurance Championship begins this week, inspired by its focus on community, families and children. In its first year, the championship raised \$1.1 million, which was donated to organizations that help those in need achieve their dreams. Here is the story of two of those dreamers, Blake and Zander Christianson.

Story:

When 10-year-old twins Blake and Zander were diagnosed with dyslexia, their parents Chad and Shelly Christianson were relieved to finally have an explanation for years of frustration at school and at home. The diagnosis was a turning point in a long struggle. It led them to the Children's Dyslexia Center of Madison where they gained access to the proper tools and education methods necessary for their sons' development.

Most of all, it opened the door to a brighter future for two kids with big dreams.

Blake and Zander started attending tutoring sessions at the Children's Dyslexia Center in September 2016. Since then, they have made progress far beyond reading and comprehension skills.

"The program has done wonders for their confidence and self-esteem. It's helping them live a happier life inside and outside of school," Shelly said.

With financial support from the Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation and other organizations, the center trains its volunteer tutors and purchases supplies including books and other educational materials. It is one of three dyslexia tutoring centers in Wisconsin, and it is the only one that offers free programming, according to Kelly Kuenzie, the center director.

"We see incredible strides because our students have an innate ability to problem solve ... we use their analytical strength to teach the language," Kuenzie said.

The nonprofit has worked with nearly 150 students since opening its doors in 2002. Over the years, 90 percent of students in the program have achieved grade-level reading skills by the time they graduate.

"Coming here gives me hope, and it calms my fears," Chad said.

The program has provided Blake and Zander with much more than reading skills. It has empowered them with confidence and a vision for their future.

"They've done a 180 since they started coming here. Our little boys are back and they're not afraid to tackle the world," Shelly said.