

# Sounding out about therapy

Local dad opens center for children

BY LIZ DeCARLO

**W**hen Belgium-raised musician/producer and engineer Fabien Van der Stappen and his wife Susan Bank, a psychiatrist, found out their 16-month-old son Benji had autism, their insurance companies called it a mental health problem and dismissed any help. So the couple, who live in Chicago's Ukrainian Village with daughter Jade, 5, and Benji, now 4, opened Chicago Sound Therapy to help their son and others like him.

**Why did you choose this particular therapy program and why did you decide to open a center for therapy?**

"My wife Susan attended a conference and heard a lecture on sound therapies. She was really excited about the benefits many children had and wanted to pursue

this form of therapy with our son. With my background as a sound engineer this therapy was particularly interesting for me. As

we explored it more we found that no one in the Chicago area was certified in iLs (Integrated Listening Systems Auditory

Integration Therapy), hence the idea to start our own business."

**You recently released a CD with other Chicago musicians to raise money for autism therapies. Can you tell us why you created this CD and how the money you raise will be used?**

"Our son's therapies and school were costing us thousands of dollars a month. It's really been a struggle to give him the intensive therapy that he needs and with the best providers. At the same time



Fabien Van der Stappen and his wife Susan Bank, with kids Benji and Jade.

we've realized that in some ways we're blessed because we were able to swing it (with the help of having great credit!). All of the profits from the sales will go directly to pay for therapies for kids with developmental delays that their insurance and school district aren't covering."

**What has been your biggest challenge as a dad in terms of having a child with special needs?**

"With autism, everyday tasks such as getting ready for school can lead to tantrums and tears. It's very hard to stay calm and not be

overwhelmed. I also often struggle with staying positive. It's terrifying to have to wonder whether your child will ever have true friendships, marry or be gainfully employed."

**What helps get you through each day?**

"Having a child with autism puts everything else in perspective. We really try not to sweat the small stuff any more. In addition, each milestone achieved is 100 times more rewarding, knowing how hard Benji has had to work for the achievement.

"We're fortunate that Benji is an incredibly sweet, smart, funny and loving boy. The autism doesn't overshadow these qualities. We get through each day by seeing his potential and strengths."

## LEARN MORE

- [www.chicago-soundtherapy.com](http://www.chicago-soundtherapy.com)
- [www.fabsoundrecords.com](http://www.fabsoundrecords.com)
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