



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## What Makes Her Amazing!

Since 2012, ten year old Zoey Blosser has competed on the Riverfront YMCA swim team. Her Mom, Megan, says that Zoey “is more confident and independent, has made tons of friends and has become a hard worker.” At the first swim meet, Mom explains, “I wasn’t allowed to watch or congratulate her, but Zoey was awesome.” She now “invites her friends, family and teachers to come watch. She takes pride in improving her times and helping younger kids. She’s a role model and doesn’t even know it,” Mom says with pride.

Although it’s already an inspirational story about one of our Y youth, there’s actually more to it. Zoey Blosser has Asperger’s, a disorder in the autism spectrum, which can cause difficulties in forming friendships due to social and communication difficulties. Also, because of a sensory processing disorder, she needs heavy resistant exercise. Mom recognized that swimming provided Zoey’s needed sensory therapy. “Zoey has always been a water kid. As she got comfortable with the instructors, she gained confidence.”

A huge moment that most moms would recall with frustration, or not even remember, occurred during a swim lesson. An instructor had to redirect Zoey and another child for horsing around, and it brought tears to her mother’s eyes – her daughter was “finally having social interaction like other kids.” In the water, Zoey “was able to play and interact and make friends for the first time.”

Now they have a second swimmer in the family, little sister Asa, and the Y is a “family affair.” Zoey’s mom, Megan, believes in the Y mission – their outreach and the family friendly atmosphere. “The Y respects that families come in all shapes and sizes; they make services available to everyone.” At the Y, we know that every family, every person is important. Zoey Blosser is just like all our Y kids, like children everywhere – she’s amazing.



Like Zoey, survey respondents from the Akron Area YMCA’s youth development programs reported the following **impact**:

- 94%** become more confident.
- 95%** develop positive relationships.
- 96%** experience improved self-esteem.