



## Cowboy Stuttering Camp

## Grows

## Confidence

Oklahomans gain resources with stuttering specialist focused on serving rural areas

Kol Glazier, 7, with a skid steer on his family's farm near Loyal, Oklahoma. Photo by Sheri Glazier

By Courtney Leeper Girgis

**K**ol Glazier likes skid steers. So much that when the then-7-year-old was asked to give a presentation at the end of Cowboy Stuttering Camp in July 2021, that's what he titled his speech: "Kol Glazier likes skid steers."

Kol stood at a podium in front of all his camp classmates and their families in an auditorium at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. Nerves had set in with the crowd, but Kol spoke confidently as he explained how he uses a skid steer to move hay on his family's farm near Loyal, Oklahoma.

"He never did bump (in speech)," says his mother, Sheri Glazier, a Cimarron Electric Cooperative member, who attended parent sessions of the camp while Kol attended individual and group sessions. "I could see in his little eyes that he was proud to talk about something he likes doing, and I'm really proud of that."

Those who stutter in rural areas are at a disadvantage when it comes to finding therapy, says John Tetnowski, Ph.D., who started Cowboy Stuttering Camp. Tetnowski came to Oklahoma State University's communication sciences and disorders program as the Jeanette Sias Endowment chair just months prior to the camp in fall 2020.

For one, not many speech-language pathologists are trained in stuttering therapy. Surveys consistently show that speech-language pathologists are least comfortable working with stuttering conditions. Tetnowski is the only board-certified stuttering specialist in the state.

Even if a speech-language pathologist is willing to take on the case, receiving services can turn into a major time commitment. A one-hour appointment can turn into three or more when traveling from rural areas.

The Glaziers are a prime example of the people Tetnowski hopes to help.

Sheri and her husband, Kyle, found the stuttering specialist through Kol's school speech teacher, who has been working with Kol since kindergarten and knew he needed more specialized help than she alone could provide.

Weekly sessions are not realistic for the family, Sheri says. However, they could commit three days per week for three weeks in the summer, even during wheat harvest.

"We knew it would overlap with wheat harvest," says Sheri, who typically cooks meals for those working in the field. "But Kyle said, 'Sheri, this is something we have to do. We need it. Our child needs it. We'll make it work.'"

Family friends took care of Kol's younger sister, Gentry, while

Sheri and Kol were gone from 1-8 p.m. On the way home, Kol got to choose where they would pick up food to take back to the harvest crew.

To keep Kyle in the loop, Sheri would share what she learned –such as how to talk about stuttering with Kol’s teachers and how to face bullies. And Kol would do his homework in the combine with his dad, answering questions like, “Has anybody ever made fun of you?” and “What makes you feel frustrated?”

“That’s probably one of the best things we got from camp,” Sheri says. “We are more comfortable talking about it and can have more open conversations. It’s OK to stutter; it’s not something we have to fix. We just have to figure out how to navigate it with confidence, and we feel so much more confident moving forward now after camp and with Dr. Tetnowski.”

In addition to Cowboy Stuttering Camp, Tetnowski co-founded the Oklahoma Association for the Knowledge of Stuttering, or OAKS. The group, about half of which is made up of rural speech-language pathologists, shares knowledge and resources to better serve those who stutter.

In the future, Tetnowski hopes to provide additional stuttering therapy training and equipment to rural speech-language pathologists. He would also like to build simulations that help those who stutter practice scenarios, like ordering in a restaurant or giving a job interview.

Children like Kol need to grow up knowing they are not alone and they are not limited by stuttering, Tetnowski says.

“If they want to be engaged in a profession as adults where they do a lot of talking, they can do so,” Tetnowski says. “Getting good services doesn’t just help that individual or a family; it helps all of society when people who stutter have the confidence to share their knowledge and skills.”

For information about stuttering support groups, clinics and camps, contact Dr. Tetnowski at [john.tetnowski@okstate.edu](mailto:john.tetnowski@okstate.edu).

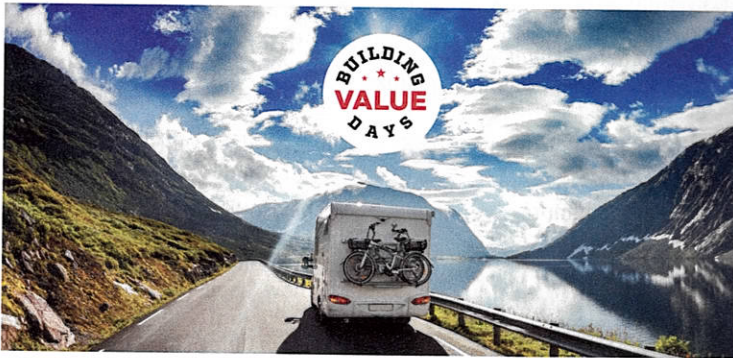
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Kol Glazier, 7, with his parents, Kyle and Sheri Glazier, and Sheri's father, Mike Yost (center), during the 2021 wheat harvest, which coincided with Cowboy Stuttering Camp. Photo by Sheri Glazier

## BY THE NUMBERS

The National Stuttering Association estimates that **1%** of adults and **4-5%** of children in the U.S. stutter. That means, based on the 2020 U.S. Census, there could be as many as **30,091** adults and **47,512** children who stutter in Oklahoma.



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