



WHOLISTIC RELEAF™

A DIVISION OF
WHOLISTIC PEDIATRICS & FAMILY CARE
ESTABLISHED IN 2005

Tampa Boy with Severe Anxiety Finds Relief in Medical Cannabis

Adolescence can be a challenging time for any child. As parents, we expect changes in our children's behavior and physical appearance. When a child changes overnight though, there is nothing a parent can do except launch a desperate search for answers and a solution. That is what happened to Tampa resident, Nikki Austin, and her son, Gavin.

Gavin was an active and happy boy. He loved wrestling and school and playing with his friends. Then all of a sudden things changed. For no apparent reason, nine-year-old Gavin began having panic attacks, debilitating anxiety, and chronic vomiting. His doctors thought it was puberty, but his mom, Nikki, knew something else was going on.

"It was like a light switch," said Nikki. "My son changed overnight."

"I feel very good now. I'm singing all the time, am more creative, and my energy is back. Cannabis really works. It is like a miracle."

Gavin was a completely different child than the one she raised, and Nikki was determined to find the source of his change.

"He had every test under the sun, but they could never find out what caused his stomach issues," said Nikki.

Gavin was rarely able to eat, and when he did he would vomit it back up. Sometimes he could vomit 9-10 times in a single day. Gavin quickly



became malnourished and twice he had to be hospitalized.

"We tried acid reflux and anti-nausea medicine for years, but it didn't help because he threw the medicine right up," said Nikki.

The vomiting was only half the battle Gavin was facing. His anxiety and panic attacks were so severe, he would vomit at the mere thought of leaving the house. Nikki stopped telling Gavin in advance about going anywhere because he would worry for weeks that something would happen while they were out. School and even weekly trips to church caused significant anxiety in Gavin.

"There was nothing I could do to keep him calm," said Nikki. "He would work himself up so much that he would have crying spells and panic attacks."

Activities and outings most families take for granted became monumental tasks for Nikki and Gavin, testing their patience and perseverance.

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About
David Berger,
MD, FAAP

Dr. David Berger ("Dr. David"), a Board Certified Pediatrician with over 20 years of experience as a clinician, has developed a national reputation in wholistic pediatric primary care. Dr. David is considered Tampa Bay area's leading authority on medical cannabis for adults and children and is one of the nation's most experienced pediatricians using medical cannabis to help facilitate the treatment of children with chronic conditions.

Dr. David graduated from The Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1994 and completed his pediatric residency at the University of South Florida/Tampa General Hospital where he first began utilizing wholistic therapies. Dr. David has been in private practice since 1997 and in 2005 opened Wholistic Pediatrics & Family Care, his medical practice in Tampa, Florida. In 2010, Dr. David was appointed Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida College of Nursing. In 2016, he launched Wholistic ReLeaf to help qualified patients become certified to use medical cannabis.

Searching for any solution to bring back her son, Nikki sought help from a psychiatrist who prescribed several medications. One medication made Gavin too lethargic to do anything but lay around. Paxil caused him to pick and dig at sores on his body. He was prescribed other medications, but they exacerbated his anxiety and increased his delusional thoughts. Then in January of 2018 after taking Zoloft, Gavin began having suicidal thoughts. Nikki had to make the difficult decision of admitting Gavin for inpatient therapy. She did this with the desperate hope of saving her little boy's life.

"The psychiatrist he saw just kept pushing medications," said Nikki. "Then I saw Dr. Berger on Bay News 9 and started researching whether or not medical cannabis could help Gavin."

Wondering if her child would ever have a normal life and feeling like she exhausted all of their options, Nikki scheduled an appointment with Dr. David Berger of Wholistic ReLeaf in April of 2018.

After checking for drug interactions, Dr. Berger certified Gavin for medical cannabis to treat his anxiety and panic attacks, as well as his chronic nausea. All are qualifying medical conditions, with similarly debilitating symptoms as are frequently seen with PTSD. Nikki was certified as his designated caregiver, which is an extra step required under Florida law. That same law also requires that children under 18 have a second physician concur with the recommendation to certify them for medical cannabis.

As with all patients Dr. Berger certifies for medical cannabis, dosing started low and slow. Nikki spent significant time researching different medical cannabis options, including the state-approved dispensaries from which these products are available. Since different dispensaries provide different products, it took some time

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to create a regimen that worked for Gavin. It was critical that Gavin be functional, not "stoned."

In just six short months Gavin is transformed. Talking to Gavin is like speaking with an old soul. Mature beyond his years, because of medical cannabis Gavin is a thriving and well spoken young man. He is getting straight A's at school and is enjoying wrestling once again.

In his own words, Gavin shared how medical cannabis has given him back his life. "Before cannabis, I was on medication that made me not want to do anything. I just wanted to stay inside and was depressed. For the past four years, it's been really hard. With cannabis, I am able to eat and not throw up. I am relaxed and can go to places like a restaurant without feeling nervous. I feel very good now. I'm singing all the time, am more creative, and my energy is back. Cannabis really works. It is like a miracle."

Nikki couldn't be more proud and happy for her son.

"For a 12-year-old boy, Gavin is very responsible about his cannabis use," said Nikki. "He knows what he is tak-



ing and when and he is very excited to share his story in the hopes of helping others."

We hope his story helps others too.

For more information about the transformative effects of medical cannabis, visit Wholistic ReLeaf at WholisticReLeaf.com.



About Wholistic ReLeaf

Wholistic ReLeaf, founded in 2016 by Dr. David Berger of Wholistic Pediatric and Family Care, empowers families and patients to choose the best treatment approach available for their medical condition. The mission of Wholistic ReLeaf is to evaluate and certify qualified patients who meet the State of Florida legal requirements for receiving medical cannabis and provide medical cannabis management and dosing consultations to patients certified by other Florida physicians. Wholistic ReLeaf is committed to providing patients with the best possible care, while also complying with the ever-shifting legal landscape of medical cannabis in the State of Florida.

For more information, or to find out if you or someone you know may be eligible to use medical cannabis as part of a customized treatment plan, visit www.WholisticReLeaf.com.