

# On the Homefront: Andrew Vogl

## PERSON OF THE WEEK

By Sunny Bosco

Harbor News Assistant Editor

Andrew Vogl knows there's no place like home. That's why the parent educator, who works with local families with children on the autism spectrum, conducts all his work these days in the home.

Andrew formerly ran the Vogl Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Ivoryton, but he now works exclusively out of private homes conducting in-home trainings, a method he says is more productive.

"Children and families were coming in too polished. They weren't bringing the real issues with them and we were missing too much with the older kids," Andrew says. "When you're standing in someone's kitchen or living room, you see just about everything, from bathroom issues to behavioral problems to 'I don't have any friends in the neighborhood.' You see everything."

These days, Andrew works on behaviors and social skills using an in-home playroom setup, which he says helps children to focus and removes the distractions of home or school. Being in the home also lets Andrew work hands-on with kids and families.

"It became a lot easier for me to come directly to the homes and say, 'Let's put a big mattress in and take out this shelf... and do it immediately!'" Andrew says, telling the story of a child who loved to play music, but who needed a place to practice.

"We took 10 minutes and cleared out a space in his basement and he was so grateful. It was well worth it"

Moving furniture to clear a space so kids can play music is part of what Andrew calls "dream coaching," a process he describes as "putting a child's dreams before their behaviors" by learning what children want to be and helping them get connected with their interests.

Andrew cites an example of a child who is good at computers: "But if we don't give her access



Andrew Vogl works in behavior analysis with children on the autism spectrum. He also makes killer barbecue ribs. Photo by Sunny Bosco/HarborNews

and help her meet her dreams, there's a high probability she could just be doing this in her bedroom well into her 30s with nobody knowing she's good at this. It's keeping dreams at the forefront."

"Andrew deserves to be person of the year. He's my hero," says Nancy Small of Middletown. Andrew has been working with Nancy's family and daughter Caitlin since 2005.

Nancy says Andrew is not like anyone her family has worked with before.

"He's made such a difference—not only in my daughter's life in terms of helping me better understand her behavior and her autism and how to support her and how to stretch her and ensure that she reaches her maximum potential—but he's also helped me understand my behaviors that were negatively impacting that growth and taught me how to be a better parent... He's helped immeasurably."

Andrew, who grew up in Santa Barbara, California, lives in Clinton with his wife and two sons and likes to snowboard in

his spare time. He also likes to cook—his specialty is ribs.

"My ribs are very well known," Andrew says.

His secret? He boils them for several hours before cooking in a special mixture of water and barbecue sauce.

Andrew is working toward a master's degree in behavior analysis at St. Joseph's University. He founded the Vogl Center in the late 1990s and says he's "done everything completely backwards," explaining that it was only after working in the behavior analysis field for years, such as with the Sunrise Program in Massachusetts, that he began his formal education.

"I got out there and got loads and loads of hands-on experience working in schools and programs," he says.

Andrew is also conducting a pilot study with children on the autism spectrum at St. Joseph's for children aged six and younger.

To nominate a person of the week, contact Sunny Bosco at [sbosco@skorepublishing.com](mailto:sbosco@skorepublishing.com).

