

ENCOURAGING SUCCESS OF DOLPHIN THERAPY

Nicolas regained his speech.

In slow motion, therapist Rik forms his lips and points with his fingers to his mouth.

"Now it is your turn Nicolas, say 'Aaaa'. Then you may swim with Spunky and Leo. Just try it." For one week, Nicolas (7) has been in Key Largo, Florida.

With the help of dolphin therapy he is trying to learn to speak again. Playing with the dolphins is the biggest reward for Nicolas. His parents Elke and Thorsten Thorn are happy. They say: "His laughter is the most beautiful noise we have ever heard". Their child was born 13 weeks early, 27 cm in length, 450 grams of weight and sick. Bleeding of the brain, hernia on both sides, a hole in the heart.

Nicolas spent the first year of his life in the hospital. Many months he was fed artificially. Seven surgeries followed. Then cardiac arrest, and five years ago the first epileptic attack. Only at the age of 18 months was Nicolas able to sit and slowly learn to speak. He stopped speaking, however, and became autistic. Back in Florida, Nicolas, with the help of word cards, builds short sentences. Each time he succeeds the dolphins clap their fins.