

Los Angeles Times *Daily Pilot*

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NEWS

Huntington Beach child actor Karl Seitz, 8, is visually impaired but sees a bright future ahead



Child actor Karl Seitz of Huntington Beach, who is visually impaired, has appeared on the hit NBC television show "This Is Us." (Katrina Seitz)

BY MATT SZABO | STAFF WRITER

MAY 7, 2022 4:12 PM PT

Huntington Beach resident Karl Seitz, who turned 8 on Saturday, has many hobbies.

He likes to play the piano, and he dances in a charity German dance group with his cousins. He rides a big bay horse, sings in a choir and enjoys swimming and playing with his two cats.

Karl, a second grader at Agnes L. Smith Elementary, is also a budding child actor. Last month he appeared on two episodes of the hit NBC television series “This Is Us,” which is winding down its final season this month. Karl played the 7-year-old version of Jack Damon — Jack Jr. — [during the big wedding episode that aired April 19.](#)

“My favorite of the actors was Chris Geere [Philip on the show],” Karl said. “He was so kind, and when I was leaving back for Huntington Beach after my few days of acting, he gave me a hug. Chrissy Metz [who plays Kate Pearson] and Chris always made sure to say hello to me to make me comfortable. I told them jokes.”

Oh yes, Karl is also a comedian. He has a Joke of the Day on his Instagram page, [@karl.j.seitz](#), which is run by his mother, Katrina.

“Why is there no ‘Uno’ in the jungle?” Karl asked, citing a recent example. “There are too many cheetahs!”

Karl, who lives with his mother, father also named Karl and 3-year-old sister Kirra, who he calls his best friend, lives a full life. That life story can be told without mentioning his visual impairment, but it also plays a big role.

He was born with bilateral Peters anomaly, a rare genetic condition that clouded the front of his corneas and severely limited his vision. One of the first calls his parents made was to [Beyond Blindness](#), a nonprofit formerly known as Blind Children’s Learning Center.

“His family was so proactive from the get-go,” said Dalit Bruchstein of



Playing the piano is one activity enjoyed by Huntington Beach resident Karl Seitz, who is visually impaired. (Katrina Seitz)

Beyond Blindness, a clinical supervisor who provided services and support for the Seitz family until Karl was ready to enter school. “But to be honest with you, from the babyhood it was very apparent that he has a lot of potential. He was very alert. You could see that he was very special, besides the special needs.”

Bruchstein said that Karl was “vanilla blind,” meaning he had no other disabilities. He hasn’t let his visual impairment slow him down, really.

Dr. Bibiana Reiser of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles has treated Karl since those early weeks of his life. She and her team check his eyes monthly. After 21 surgeries, including several cornea transplants, he was able to gain some of his vision.

“I can see all of the colors of the rainbow, and I can see large things, things that are close up,” he said. “I’m not very good at seeing things that are way far away. Besides, I don’t even have a telescope.”



The Seitz family of Huntington Beach (Kirra, Katrina, Karl and Karl) are pictured at Lower Yosemite Falls on vacation. (Katrina Seitz)

Karl quickly learned Braille, and acting has not really proved difficult to him either. He’s also gotten roles in television commercials and local plays.

“We just teach him the lines,” Katrina Seitz said. “He memorizes things extremely quickly. It all comes very naturally.”

Karl has plenty of support at his school, too, with teachers and visually impaired experts who support his continued learning. Parisa Lamarra of the West Orange County Consortium for Special Education works with him each

weekday to expand his Braille reading and vocabulary, while Andy Griffith trains him twice a week so that he is an independent cane traveler.

Though "This Is Us" is wrapping up, Karl said he plans to continue acting. His visual impairment won't get in the way of that or anything else.

He became good friends with his sibling on the show, Sophia Sawaya, and now their parents set up play dates.

"It was fun while it lasted," Karl said of the drives up to the set of the show, adding that he had his own trailer. "When I went home, I was like, 'I have to go?' I love acting."