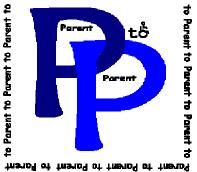
Texas Parent to Parent



Texas Parent to Parent

Providing support and information for families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other health care needs

3710 Cedar Street, Box 12, Austin, TX 78705 866-896-6001 512-458-8600

Website: www.txp2p.org Email: info@txp2p.org

2nd Annual Texas Parent to Parent Conference

Connecting Families of Children with Disabilities & Special Health Care Needs

arly morning, Thursday, August 3rd, 2006 - all is serene at the Ragsdale Center at



St. Edward's University in Austin, site of the 2nd Annual Texas Parent to Par-



ent Conference. We had over 400 registrants for the 3-day event. Staff, Board members, and volun-

teers arrived early to get ready for

registration for our Special Education Seminar by





Our exhibitors came early on Friday to set up: Adorno Mobility, Amerigroup, Advocacy, Inc., Bydee Art,

Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP), The Children's Partner-



ship, EveryChild, Inc., Hearts & Hooves, Inc., Little Tesoros Therapy Services, Mini Mar-

keting, Partners Resource Network,

Inc. - PATH Project, Patient Support Services, Talking Book Program - Texas State Library & Archives



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Help TxP2P by using our Randall's Good Neighbor Remarkable Card Number 10043!

Texas Families Unite!



Join other Texas families to tell your story and make it count!

March 12, 2007

Are you waiting for community services, therapy, attendant care, durable medical equipment or respite?

Are you struggling with transition from children's services to adult health care services?

Are transportation issues keeping your loved one with a disability from work, medical care or school?

Sponsored by TXPACS:

Parents of children with disabilities who advocate for appropriate and adequate community supports/services to allow people to live in the community, not in institutions.

What TXPACS supports:

Expansion of community services and supports to keep children w disabilities in their community and keep families together

Everyone has a story to tell... What's yours?

Share your story to make a positive change for community services for people with disabilities in Texas!

We are looking for:

Success stories: how community services have made a positive difference in the life of your loved one with a disability.

Stories of needed services: what does your loved one with a disability need to live a life of choice?

Contact Jeanine Pinner at <u>jeanine@txp2p.org</u> to find out how to share your story!

Consolidation of state schools and redirection of money saved to adequately fund community services and supports

Legislation to reduce and eliminate waiting lists for Medicaid waiver program

TXPACS online Yahoo Group: To subscribe: txpacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

2nd Annual Texas Parent to Parent Conference

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Commission, Texas Early Childhood Intervention, Texas Association for

Medically Fragile Children, and Texas Unit of Recording for the



Blind & Dyslexic. Conference registration was under-

We were honored to have Nancy DiVenere as our keynote speaker.

Nancy founded Parent to Parent of Vermont in 1986 and helped it become the premiere parent to parent program in the

country, pioneering a Medical Education program. She is currently the President of the Board of Directors for Parent to Parent USA. Saturday Night brought the Family

Gathering, with entertainment by

We Are the Chorus,

Actual Lives,



and Joe McDermott, who as you can see, thrilled the kids and adults with his performance!





Joe took time to pose with his fans! Saturday brought more seminars and the Sib Group.



We were thrilled with the turn-out for the conference—over 400 people registered for the 3-day event. There were over 150 parents and 70 professionals at Wrightslaw and over 180 parents and 30 professionals at the conference. We are already looking for a new location and a date in June for 2007.

At the end of the conference, even the St. Ed squirrels were worn out!



THANKS AGAIN TO OUR SPONSORS!



CORRECTION: "Understanding Family Support and Opening Doors to the Future"

Texas Center for Disability Studies at The University of Texas at Austin

CORRECTION: THIS ARTICLE WAS RUN IN OUR SUMMER NEWSLETTER AND MISTAKENLY INDICATED THIS DOCUMENT WAS "FOR PARENTS OF CHIL-DREN LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS IN TEXAS OR AT EXTREME RISK OF PLACEMENT." THIS WAS IN-CORRECT-THE DOCUMENT IS MEANT FOR ANY FAMILY WHO HAS A CHILD WITH A DISABIL-ITY. WE HOPE YOU WILL TAKE TIME TO REVIEW THE DOCU-MENT-IT EXPRESSES THE IM-PORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORT. A CONCEPT WHICH TEXAS PAR-ENT TO PARENT ALSO SUPPORTS. The Texas Center for Disability Studies at The University of Texas at Austin has produced a new guide on "Understanding Family Support and Opening Doors to the Fu-

ture." The 26-page guide is a resource for parents of children with disabilities or other health care needs. The guide has

lists of the state's seven Medicaid Waivers, other state-administered community care programs, parent groups, state agencies and state disability advocacy organizations. There is also information on natural supports, formal supports, the importance of living in a family, Medicaid, and how to navigate the service system. Funding for the guide was provided by The Trull Foundation of Palacios, Texas. The guide is n - 1 i e http://tcds.edb.utexas.edu/docume nts/ut_tcds_family.pdf or contact them at 512-232-0740 or 800-828-7839.

Telling Your Story: What's the Point?

"For the sakes of our children, we must strive to be patient with those whose experiences have not given them access to our perspective. It is our duty to lead these people to a fuller understanding of the beauty and ability within our children. To do this we must become effective advocates." (Borello, 2004)

few weeks ago, I attended the Texas State Autism Conference in Dallas with my son, Jake. Our keynote speaker was Taylor Crowe, a 25-year old self-advocate who has Autism. Over 2000 people listened intently as this extremely impressive young man talked about his life as a person with autism. Although we all heard the same words and felt many of the same things, I'm sure that we each also left with a little different "take" on what we heard and saw.

Through a video, we were privileged to see Taylor as a baby, a toddler, and finally, a young man. We saw Taylor before and after the onset of his autism and listened to the experiences and perspectives of several of his family members. After the video, Taylor's father spoke about their lives together, adding yet another dimension to our understanding. When Taylor took the stage, you could practically feel the anticipation of the crowd. He didn't let us down! Taylor shared not only the events of his life, but his thoughts, feelings, regrets and dreams. He was amazing!

I watched and listened both as a mom and as an advocate for people with disabilities. I was impressed with Taylor's poise and eloquence, his open heart and his willingness to share his journey with so many others. Although my son is already making his own journey very successfully, it was inspiring and reinforcing to hear Taylor talk about his. This was exactly what I came to hear and see!

As an advocate who helps others learn to tell their own stories to make positive change for their children and in systems, I admired the numerous methods Taylor and his family utilized to tell a story that covered 25 years in little over an hour. They utilized technology (the video) to cover a lot of years of Taylor's life and development. When Taylor spoke to the audience,



he relied very little on the hard copy in his hands, making it clear that he had worked very hard on his presentation. Every technique used to share Taylor's story was centered around his strengths and gifts.

My son, Jake, listened as a selfadvocate, and as I shot sideways glances at him (so he wouldn't notice me watching him), it was clear that

Jeanine Pinner, TxP2P

he was listening intently to every word. Through several later conversations with Jake, I came to understand that he identified with many of the experiences and feelings that Taylor talked about. He realized, once and for all, that he wasn't the only one making a journey with autism, that he shared many experiences and feelings with a lot of other people. There was a new bounce in his step and a more confident air about him.

The keynote session was full of service providers, too: teachers, therapists, psychologists, social workers, administrators ... it was obvious that they were also inspired by Taylor's message. I'm sure that many of them were thinking of the young child with autism back home that they work with, and now they were seeing that child with a slightly different vision ... one of even higher expectations and possibilities. Taylor's story was personal and touched the hearts of many people that day.

Taylor's presentation surely demonstrates the awesome power of telling a story and making it personal! I first began to put our story together when my friend, Tracey, who's an Autism Specialist, asked me to co-present an autism workshop with her for a group of regular and special education teachers, sharing the parent's perspective. Scary, initially, but then exciting! An opportunity to share what was in my heart with people who have a

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huge impact on our kids - wow! I wanted them to know how important they are to all of us, and that most parents treasure a positive and meaningful partnership with their children's teachers. I knew that if they had an understanding of where Jake "started" and where he is now, that they would want to know how he got there. I worked hard to develop the story in a way that would convey to them just how powerful an impact they could have in the life of a child with autism.

The first couple of times I told this story to a group, I got a little tearyeyed and choked up for just a moment. It was a little like reliving the journey, with all the joys, roadblocks and successful arrivals coming back to life. I told my children's story with pride because they worked so hard to accomplish their goals, and to live lives of their choosing. I continue to ask my children from time to time for their permission to continue sharing their story. It is really their story, after all.

It meant a lot to me (and still does) to use these precious opportunities to let people who work with our kids know that they are absolutely essential to our children achieving their own visions of success. wanted to remind them that no one works harder than our children, and that their desire to be successful is a critical part of achieving that suc-Cess

My reasons for telling my daughter's and son's stories cover a lot of ground and vary, depending on the audience. As an example, when presenting it as part of a workshop for teachers or parents, my overall goal is to emphasize how important it is for a child with a disability to have a really good Support Team. Their story also demonstrates other important points. To list a few . . .

- The impact and value of a strong positive home-school relationship
- The value of true & meaningful inclusion
- To focus on strengths, not deficits
- · How changes in special education

law over time have made a positive impact

- To believe in the promise and goodness of our children
- To emphasize that all children want to be successful and can, if provided the appropriate support and tools
- Not to put limits on expectations ... keep them high

Putting 20 years' worth of experiences, feelings, and learned lessons into a short story was not an easy task, but focusing on the outcomes I desired from the intended audiences and the setting in which I would present it helped a lot. I thought about it for a long time before I actually started. I have to actually visualize things before they make sense to me, so as I thought about the 20+ years the story covered, it began to come alive

The very first time I told our story to teachers. I knew it had touched some hearts when I saw a few people wiping away tears. That connection meant that their hearts were wide

The first couple of times I told this story to a group, I got a little tearyeyed and choked up for just a moment. It was a little like

open to hear more about the magnifidiffercent they ence could make in the lives of our children. reliving the journey. . (Actually, they already

know it. . . they just don't hear it from us often enough!) Tears from parents sometimes mean, "Someone else understands how I feel" or "I'm not alone!"

Effective storytelling is one of the most basic and valuable tools in an advocate's tool box.

I guess I always knew instinctively that telling a story to illustrate a point was effective and I've used this technique all my life. Until I started sharing my children's stories in an advocacy setting, though, I never really thought about it much or recognized it as a tool. Now, I see stories everywhere I look - in the newspaper, magazines, emails,

television ... they're everywhere and they bring the subject to life.

Keep it simple ... keep it short . . . make it interesting . . . repeat the top 2 or 3 key points often.

The points I focus on at any given time may change and depend on the audience. In order for a story to make a positive impact to affect change (whether in an ARD/IEP meeting, the state legislature, or with an acquaintance), it is important that the listener "connect" with what you're saying. Make it real! When the listener "connects" with some or all of your story in a personal way, it becomes a shared experience ... they begin to remember their own experiences, those of a loved one, a friend or an acquaintance. Connecting in this way makes the story so much more powerful and makes the outcome you desire more likely!

Make it personal! Most of us will not remember the impressive facts and figures we heard at a presentation or read in the newspaper, but when the tally sheets and legalese are translated into how something affects one or more individuals, our ability to understand and remember is far greater. We tend to remember those personal details about people and experiences far better (and longer) than the statistics because we identify with them in some way. We may not always remember the name of the speaker, but we frequently remember a story they told to illustrate a point they were making.

I'm not saying that statistics aren't important; I'm just saying that by themselves, they only tell part of the story. Make the statistics meaningful by making them personal! Bring the statistics to life for the listener by illustrating how they impact the life of a real person.

You know, as a preschool director, the connection and empathy I feel with others - parents and professionals alike - is so powerful when I hear stories that

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Telling Your Story: What's the Point?

connect somehow with my own.. I get tired sometimes of hearing broad statements about how important collaboration is in thinking about family-centered services and programs. What really makes a difference for me is when I hear stories about what happened today at the center ... what kind of difference we made in the lives of the families we serve."(Gabbard, 1998)

Choose the most effective way to share your story for its greatest impact. Is that verbally? Putting it in a letter? Creating a Portfolio for your child? How about a narrated or captioned videotape showcasing your child? Sometimes, it's who is telling the story that makes the most powerful statement - is it you or your child, a self-advocate?

Is the purpose of telling your story geared to generating a specific response or outcome? Or, is it to make people think about something in a different way? There are

times that omitting a specific conclusion so that listeners draw their own is the most effective method

to use

Choose the most effective way to share your story for its greatest impact. Is that verbally? Putting telling/showing it in a letter?

Whatever method you choose to tell your story, take time to practice it to a family member or a

friend who will give you honest and constructive feedback; pick your toughest critic. Here are some questions you can ask of your critic: Some questions to get feedback: (Gabbard, 1998)

- What key phrases and words caught your ear?
- What was the most successful part of the presentation?
- · What was the most difficult to understand?
- If you knew the story was going to be told again, in what ways could it be different?

Continued from Page 4

- What were the major themes?
- How did the audience respond?
- What about volume? Pace?
- Did I use humor effectively?
- Did the story make logical sense? So what's the point? Telling your story effectively and making a difference by making it personal ... that's the point! Happy endings to

Resources to check out:

- 1.http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pu bs/famexp.pdf#search=%22Glen n%20Gabbard%20Family%20Exp eriences%22
- 2. http://www.cppp.org/real_ stories.php
- 3.http://www.tell-us-yourstory.com/
- 4. http://www.girlshealth.gov/ disability/ stories.htm
- 5.http://www.learningdisabilities.or g.uk/ page.cfm?pagecode=FBPS
- 6.http://www.new-horizons /exp wri .html
- 7. http://www.beliefnet.com/story /196/story_19631_1.html

Sharing Life

e all have 'bad days'...perhaps the utilities payment was not received in time and suddenly you're trying to read a new macaroni and cheese recipe in the dark. you've backed into your mail box hours after picking up your car from the repair shop. Or your child's teacher has described your 12-year-old daughter's behavior in math class as "not on task." These seemingly small setbacks are magnified several times when living with a child who has a disability.

The myriad of daily tasks moms and dads attend to on a regular basis become secondary to meeting the unique needs of their child, or children, who may have a disability. Everyday life appears to hold an added layer of awareness, apprehension, even anxiety. Concerns are no longer limited to bills being paid on time, but grow to include conwill insurance stant researching: cover a modification to a wheelchair; are my child's needs being accurately addressed in her Individual Education Plan and if not, how do I change it; how do I find a doctor who specializes in emotional or behavioral issues for those with disabilities; how do I get the spaghetti sauce from the latest explosive episode off my newly-painted,

popcorn-textured ceiling.

Often I've imagined having a sister who lived nearby (preferably a composite of Martha Stewart, Joyce Brothers, and Erma Bombeck) who was able to help me on a regular basis...by letting one or all of my

kids sleep over, offering to have family cook-outs, helping get any of us to doctors' appointments or shopping for school clothes or meeting with teachers...whatever was needed at the time. imagined having this sister's help would feel like

taking a long, deep, cleansing breath—without the labor pain. And then it would feel like resting and having a chance to think, dream, or just be. Not only would I receive the gift of time but I'd have great comfort knowing that this restorative help was provided by someone I could trust with such important work.

My personal experience as a parent of a child with a disability was an important resource when I began working for EveryChild four years ago; I could more easily understand the feeling of being overwhelmed by the unique and varying needs of children with disabilities.

Linda Thune, EveryChild, Inc. and TxP2P Volunteer

EveryChild, Inc. is a non-profit organization whose mission is to create a system that ensures every child grows up in a family instead of an institution. Many families have had to place their child with a disability into an institutional set-

> ting due to their personal circumstances or lack of supports to help them keep their child at home. EveryChild works to help children and young adults with disabilities who are currently living in facilities return to their birth families or, when that's

not possible, help to recruit loving families (called support families) who can care for children on behalf of their parents.

If you can imagine being a "sister" to a parent looking for family life for her child, know another family that might be interested, or want to find out more about becoming a support family and shared parenting, helping a family care for a child on a part-time or full-time basis, please visit our website at www.everychildtexas.org or call EveryChild at 512-342-8844 or 877-742-8844 (toll-free). don't even have to be Martha Stewart.



he Texas Parent Group Network is a Yahoo listserv group that provides a forum for leaders of parent groups in Texas to share information, support and resources.

This listsery is intended to be a resource not only for established parent groups in the state, but for emerging groups as well. So, whether you're a leader of a group that is very active, a group that's struggling or you're trying to get a group started, the Texas Parent Group listserv is a great resource!

The Texas Parent Group Network currently counts among its members leaders of local groups, statewide programs, and everything in between in size and scope. Is your group looking for speakers, funding, topics,

Are you part of a group of etc.? parents in your area that recognizes the need for a parent group but is having difficulty getting started? Is your group struggling with issues that keep it from being effective? Are you losing members? You may find the help and information you need in this group!

Members of the Texas Parent Group Network will be listed as resources on Texas Parent to Parent's webbased Resource Directory so that anyone who's interested in contacting or joining a particular group can do We frequently receive phone calls and emails asking if we know of any parent groups in particular areas of Texas. Many people would like to connect with or join parent groups in their areas, but don't know how to find them. We can only refer interested people to the groups that we know about!

We would love to know about all of the parent groups (parents/family members of children with disabilities, chronic illness or other health care needs) in Texas so that we can include them in TxP2P's web-based Resource Directory. So, whether you're a leader of a group that would like to be included or you know about a group that may be interested in joining, please let us know!

To join, please email me at jeanine@txp2p.orq. For more information, send me an email or call me at (512)217-3558. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

My Brother

hen my brother was a child, one of his favorite pastimes was to get a sponge from the kitchen and scrub every surface in the house, including people's bodies. We were never sure why he did this, but it kept him amused for hours at a stretch. On one particular instance, however, my brother could not find a sponge. What he could find was a stick of butter left out on the kitchen counter to soften. This, he decided, was a suitable substitute for a sponge, and he proceeded to rub the butter over everything in the living room. By the time our mother found him, he had covered the piano keys, the television screen, the couch cushions, and several framed paintings in greasy butter.

My brother, Will, is twenty-four years old now but has the comprehension of a two-year-old. He was born with severe mental retardation. He cannot talk, read, or write, though he generally does understand what is said to him. He has a firm grasp of the physical world, and absolutely no understanding of anything at all abstract. If I tell him we are going somewhere in the car, he will walk to the garage, open the car door, and sit down in the passenger seat, enthusiastically awaiting the trip. However, if I tell him that we are going somewhere two hours from now, this means nothing to him, because "two hours from now" is not something he can see and touch.

My brother is very lucky to have been born to our parents, as opposed to some other two people. My mother started her career as a writer and English teacher. ever, ever since Will was born, she has worked exclusively in the field of disabilities, usually helping to connect parents of children with disabilities with appropriate resources. Many parents of children with disabilities never want to think about

My attitude towards my brother has over the course of my life.

what will happen to their offspring when they are gone, whereas my parents changed greatly already have mechanisms in place to care for Will when they die. Our par-

ents have always been Will's strongest advocates, always doing everything in their power to ensure that Will has as fulfilling a life as possi-

My attitude towards my brother has changed greatly over the course of my life. When Will and I were children, we never got along; we fought constantly. Now that we are both older we are friends, and we enjoy doing things together, such as going to the park or going for milkshakes. But as a child, I once said I wanted to "send Will to the moon." My parents, of course, tried to discourage this attitude in me, but I felt wronged by my brother. To me, a grave injustice had been committed, and I had been cheated out of a real brother. Also, Will often threw temtantrums and hit, bit, or scratched my parents and me. I was,

Randall Alexander, Austin

however, not allowed to fight back, which I saw as grossly unfair. In addition, I saw a double standard as Will was praised for doing what I thought were trivial things, such as using the toilet or putting on his own pants, while I had to earn praise by making A's in school. Now, of course, I see that my parents could not possibly have held my brother and me to the same standards, but when I was a child I did not understand this

My brother, Will, has affected my personal growth in many ways. When we were in elementary school, our parents had to get my brother ready for school in addition to getting themselves ready for their respective jobs. Since Will violently opposed getting ready for school, every morning was a battle for our parents. As a result of this, I learned at a very early age to do things for myself that other children's parents did for them. Every morning since I was about six years old, I made my own breakfast and packed my own lunch. I remember sitting in the lunch room with my peers while they opened their lunches and were surprised by what their parents had packed for them for lunch. I remember being sad that my lunch was never a surprise, since I had always packed my lunch myself. I recall wishing that, just sometimes, the contents of my lunch could be a surprise, too. I believe that my brother made me grow up

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My Brother

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and become mature and selfsufficient in many ways much earlier than my peers.

Having a brother with mental retardation has, of course, greatly affected my general perception of people with developmental disabilities. Despite past feelings of resentment towards my brother, I now see him as a brother, a friend, and a human being. I think that coming to understand my brother better over the years has helped me to gain a better appreciation of all people with disabilities. I can now see that they have personalities, feelings, fears, and wants, just as I do. I think that my brother has contributed greatly to this understanding.

My parents have also significantly affected my attitude towards people with developmental disabilities. My mother has always been Will's strongest advocate, consistently ensuring that he always had the best possible schooling, care, and opportunities for stimulation, fun, and growth. She has worked for nearly twenty-four years to help the parents of children with various disabilities, and she has, over the course of my life, helped to shape my views by educating me about different kinds of "handicaps". Also, my father always treated Will very consistently with discipline whenever appropriate, but more importantly, with love and affection. This, too, has helped me come to respect my brother, specifically, and people with disabilities, in general.

Outside of my immediate family, attitudes towards my brother have varied. I have one aunt and uncle who love to entertain us at their house on holidays, and they always explicitly include Will in their invitations. They are always patient with Will, and they always work to accommodate his special needs. Will is clumsy and prone to break things, but they never fault him for this. By contrast, I have another aunt who is impatient, sharp, and unforgiving with Will. Last Christmas, she invited my parents and me to her house for dinner. But when my mother told her that we would have Will with us, she effectively rescinded her invitation. On the whole, with the exception of my one aunt, my extended family has been largely accepting of my brother.

My schooling has had some affect on my perception of people with develop-

mental disabilities. In elementary school, Will and I went to the same school. After that, we went to separate schools. In elementary school, I was always personally acquainted with Will's teachers. I believe that this helped me acquire a positive attitude towards my brother and others with disabilities. The special education teachers and their classroom aids always befriended me, and I occasionally visited Will's classroom, where I was exposed to many children with various special needs. I can recall a specific instance when I was excused from my regular classes to go make waffles with Will's class (though I have no idea how I managed to get out of my regular class). I remember thoroughly enjoying myself while helping the children with disabilities to mix batter, apply said batter to the hot iron, and to garnish and devour said waffles.

My memory produces a certain instance in school, in first grade, when



called upon to defend people with dis-

abilities. Some of the members of the special education class had the job of going to each classroom in the school to collect the attendance papers from all the teachers. I remember one day when a child with mental retardation came to our class, and all of my classmates laughed at the child when they saw him. I was incensed, and the next day I asked my teacher to be allowed to talk to my class about having a brother with mental retardation. As a first-grader I was not very eloquent, but I basically tried to tell my classmates that people with mental retardation were people, too, and that they deserved respect just like the rest of us. I have no idea whether I made any impact on anyone in my class, but telling everyone this made me feel better. Even though I did not always get along with my brother, I still wanted to defend him and others like him.

When Will and I were young, our mother took us to a church with another family. There were three boys, the oldest of whom had mental retardation, like my brother. I was friends with the youngest son and we always went to church together, with our

respective siblings with disabilities. I remember that various people within the church would try to talk to Will and give him the opportunity to learn about God. But I knew that God was too abstract a concept for my brother, and I wondered why anyone would bother trying to explain Christianity to Will. It always seemed pointless to me for my brother to be attending church, since he was not mentally capable of accepting Jesus as his savior. I think that seeing my brother in a church setting helped me to understand his limitations, which was important for helping me to understand him as a person. While my family and I generally try to focus on what Will can do, rather that what he cannot do, it is still important to know what he understands and what he does not understand. This knowledge helps us to provide him with as rich and fulfilling a life as possible, without wasting time and money on things from which he cannot benefit.

Being good friends with another child who had a brother with a developmental disability helped shape my attitude towards people with learning impairments. My friend once told me that he loved his brother but did not like him. This was, to me, a novel attitude. I decided then that I too loved Will but did not like him. I have, since, of course, decided that I both love and like my brother, but this is a recent development.

I have had other friends over the years that have had various attitudes towards my brother. In high school I had a friend whom Will accidentally hit on the head. Will sometimes, during fits of enthusiasm, swings his arms around indiscriminately. During one such display of emotion, Will accidentally hit this friend. After that, he was afraid of Will and refused to get near my brother. This sort of incident, however, has not affected my attitude towards Will or other people with developmental disabilities, as Will has not hit anyone on purpose in recent years. All such incidents in the recent past have always been accidents on Will's part. Overall, I am glad to be friends with

my brother, Will, and I am glad that he and I can spend quality time with each other. I hope that Will and I can remain friends throughout our lifetimes.

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Serving children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special needs by providing support and information to their families through peer support, resource referral and public awareness.

Date	Conference Title	Location	Registration Information
Saturday, October 7, 2006	2 nd Annual Disability Conference & Resource Fair	Graceview Baptist Church, Tomball, TX	Please email MichelleMGuppy@yahoo.com for registration information or mail request to Texas Autism Advocacy, 16210 Cypress Trace, Cypress, TX 77429
Wednesday, Nov. 1 through Friday, Nov. 3, 2006	Making It Work Statewide Mental Health and Deafness Conference	Norris Conference Center Austin, TX	Contact: DARS 4800 N. Lamar Blvd, 3rd Floor Austin, TX 78756 512-407-3250 Email: dhhs@dars.state.tx.us http:/www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs/mhconf.pdf
Thursday, Nov. 2 through Friday, Nov. 3, 2006	Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) Transition Conference	Edwin Hornberger Conference Center Texas Medical Center Houston, TX	Contact: Tamara Greiner Baylor College of Medicine Office of Continuing Education 713-798-8237 Fax: 713-798-7955
Wednesday, Nov. 8 through Saturday, Nov. 11, 2006	42 nd Annual LDAT State Conference	Renaissance Austin Hotel Austin, TX	Contact: LDAT (Learning Disabilities Association of Texas) 1011 West 31 st Street Austin, TX 78705 For more information, call 512-458-8234 or go to their website www.ldat.org/about/
Wednesday, Nov. 29 through Friday, Dec. 1, 2006	Reaching New Horizons Workforce and Economic Development	Gaylord Texas Hotel & Convention Center Grapevine, TX	Contact: Joanne Brown 101 East 15th Street, Suite 206-D Austin, TX 78778 512-463-6389 www.twc.state.tx.us/2006wfconf_reg.pdf
Friday, Dec. 1 through Sunday, Dec. 3, 2006	Abilities Expo/Texas	George R. Brown Convention Center Houston, TX	Contact: Questex Media Group, Inc. 757 Third Avenue, 5th Floor New York, NY 10018 800-385-3085 Email: abilities@questex.com http://tex.abilitiesexpo.com/iaetex/v42/