



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities asked families to describe the impact of our services on their lives. Their stories remind us daily of the importance of the work we do.

Our thanks to Veronika Gulchin and Jessica Hobbs who volunteered their time and talents to take many of these wonderful photos!

Support for Families has trained me to be an empowered advocate for my own children. Without their support, it would have been much more stressful for me to navigate through the complex special needs systems. As a parent mentor, I feel privileged to be able to help other families facing similar challenges.

- *Stelly Kuo and Ross MacKinnon
Cassidy and Calista*



Veronika Gulchin See My World Photography

When you first have a child with disabilities, it is extremely overwhelming... For us, getting educated is really the key - it helped us with acceptance, with getting organized and prioritizing everything that was coming at us at once. Now, we can adore Emilio for who he is, rather than who he 'should' be. The future is bright.

*- Afra Afsharipour
and Diego Valderrama
Emilio*



Our family has been lucky to have the benefit of education and guidance from SFCD since 1993 when Chloe was first diagnosed; that is more than 17 years worth of support. We are very sure that without the assistance of SFCD, we would not have been able to access educational programs or have known her legal rights. As a result, Chloe is now about to enter the adult world with capabilities and the possibilities of fulfilling her full potential. We are forever indebted to this amazing organization!

- *Sally and Chloe Spencer*



Veronika Gulchin See My World Photography



When Mark and I found out about our daughter's condition – Hydrocephalus – two weeks before she was born, we were completely frightened and at a loss as to where to get support or if we'd ever meet anyone in our circumstance.

We were so fortunate to find the Tuesday Night Support Group at Support for Families. We found a community where we could connect with other parents and not feel so isolated. We're very grateful that SFCD exists!

- *JoAnna Van Brusselen & Mark Harris
Iolani*



Veronika Gulchin See My World Photography

Support for Families has provided my son Jaylen with the opportunities to socialize and meet friends in a loving and accepting environment. It has given our family a chance to meet and network with many individuals and families who are also advocates for creating an awareness of children with disabilities. This overall support has provided my family with the educational resources and confidence to offer Jaylen the best opportunities to flourish and grow as an individual. Many thanks to Support for Families for their dedication and commitment to all families and individuals with children with disabilities!

*- Melissa Cayabyab
Jordan, Jaylen, Leia*



When we learned our newborn child, Sarah, was born with Down Syndrome we didn't know where to turn.

Then we found Support for Families. They sent us a new parent packet with loads of information on everything we would need to know to start our new journey with Sarah. They listened to our questions and concerns and pointed us in the right direction. They showed us the way when we felt most lost. They even hooked us up with a mentor who was a fellow parent of a child with Down Syndrome... We attend monthly support group meetings and they even have child care for the meetings. Talk about support!! Everyone we speak with at SFCD is there to help. We benefit greatly from this wonderful organization. Thank you!!

*-Janette and John Najjar
Sarah*



Support for Families was so helpful for me. I got more confidence as a parent and more information, not only about the law but about my son's disability also.

Get educated, get involved, and you get a lot of support from Support for Families.

*-Cinthya and Kenneth Padilla
Nathan*



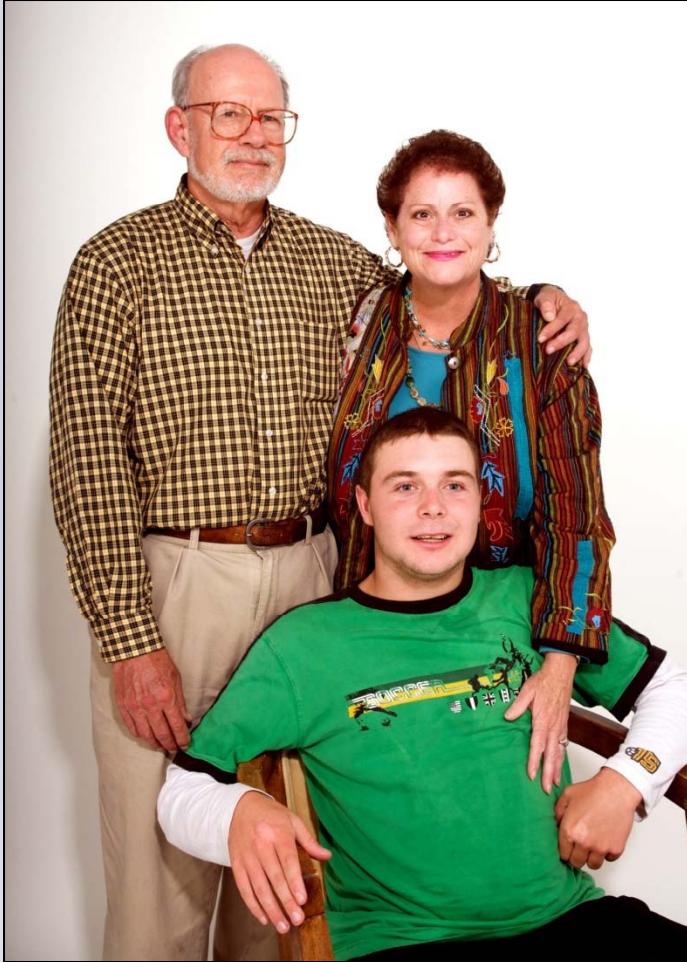
Brian Recktenwald Photography

The first years of Jake's life were a never-ending cycle of doctor's appointments, therapy appointments, and tube feeding around the clock. It was isolating and we were filled with so much worry about what might be wrong.

Thank goodness for Support for Families! SFCD became my lifeline when I had nowhere else to turn and no one seemed to understand.

Whether getting information from my Parent Mentor, or having a heart-to-heart with my Parent Mentor, calling the Warmline, or attending a seminar, there was— and is— always support from someone who wants to help.

- *Judy C. Chen and Michael V. Gamboa, DDS
Jake and Noah*



Our son, Sam, is now 17 years old and has autism. We have been attending programs offered by Support For Families for several years. The monthly parent trainings have informed and enlightened us while providing child care so we can have Sam with us. The various events throughout the year, such as the wonderful holiday ice skating party, are meaningful because we can bring our son and he can enjoy these events in the way that meets his needs.

This organization and its existence is very important to us. Every person we have ever met who is associated with SFCD has been warm and supportive. They are offering programs, for education, support and just plain fun that meet our needs as parents of a special needs child and our son's needs.

- Linda Stevens and John Bowers
Sam



Our family has been lucky to have the benefit of Support for Families' meetings that enable us to connect with other parents and advocates so we can share, support, and learn from our experiences of caring for children with special needs.

Support for Families events are rare opportunities to enjoy outings with our children, knowing we will be welcomed and not pressured to explain our child's unexpected behaviors. We also know we can express our concerns and feedback to ensure the success of future events.

- *Stephen and Linda Leonard
Drake and Siena*



Jessica Hobbs

Initially, SFCD helped us by providing us with opportunities to learn about various therapies. When the time came to transition Michael to preschool, SFCD trained us to advocate for Michael's educational needs, by understanding the law and our rights.

Over time, we have visited SFCD often, as it is always adding new information, activities and resources. We discover recreation and family fun at Access to Adventure. We join the bi-monthly parent support group meetings. We are connected to SFCD's online community where special needs families can share information, stories, questions, concerns and support. We are assigned to a parent mentor and trained to be a mentor. We attend educational workshops and empower ourselves with knowledge on relevant topics and our legal rights.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to now be involved on the Board of Directors of this great organization. We have never met a more competent and professional group of staff as we have at SFCD. And we have never met such amazing parents as we have through SFCD. We will be forever grateful for having SFCD in our lives.

*- Eileen and Nersi Boussina
Michael*



Ever since our daughter, Ava, was diagnosed Autistic at 22 months, we needed resources and support to help us through the dramatic first year of organizing therapies; we needed the support of other families who also had autistic children. [We became] part of a community where there is a well of informative, updated and essential information to help our daughter and our family.

She's now attending preschool. Support for Families' IEP clinics and information workshop on advocacy helped us obtain the services our daughter needs for her development, growth and education.

- *John & Janet Kunze*
Ava and Jack

It took us some time to reach out once we were informed of Thomas' diagnosis and prognosis. Once we gained the courage, we joined the Tuesday Night Group. It changed our lives. Not only did the other families become friends, but the wealth of information that was discussed at this group has allowed our family to thrive.

With the help of Support for Families, we have been given the tools and encouragement to successfully advocate for our son in all aspects of his life.

*- Isabel Lydon-Suen & Ron Suen
Thomas and Jaspre*



Veronika Gulchin See My World Photography



The Chinese Support Group and the Autism Group have helped me learn from other parents' experiences, expressing my feelings and enjoying social gatherings with them.

As a CAC [Community Advisory Committee for Special Education] member, I have an opportunity to express my opinions and to advocate for more effective special education programs and services for my son.

The Saturday Parent-Professional Workshops and Behavior Trainings have helped me practice the appropriate strategies on my son and improve his challenging behaviors.

Thank you, Support for Families!

- Mee Yip-Li
Andrew

Jessica Hobbs



Support for Families has helped me understand I'm not the only one who has a child with PDD/Autism. I went to a support group and they helped me so many ways.

*-Kissy Monero
Dyson*

We benefit from so many things at Support for Families. We attend trainings and family events. Julia loves to use the library. Our favorites? Well, we have two: our parent mentor has been our shoulder to lean on for eight years and we still call upon her to help us; and the Tuesday Night Group of parents has been invaluable to us.

The amount of help, understanding, and perspective we receive every time we go, it's just priceless. And yet these services are free! Thank you, Support for Families.

*- Laurie and Lee Strawn
Julia*





The first years were beyond confusing and terrifying for me. What most people don't realize about having a child with disabilities is that your life becomes a tangled web of government agencies, doctors' appointments, therapy appointments, school district battles, insurance problems, attorney's appointments, etc., etc.

I was lucky, fairly early on, to discover SFCD and I cannot even begin to tell you how much they have helped me over the years. They provide what parents who have kids with disabilities REALLY need advice, referrals, education, support groups, training AND someone to watch the kids while you do it all! When you have a kid with disabilities, you NEED help and guidance, and Support for Families is always there to give it.

*-Laura and Gene Lanzone
Robert and Tony*



My wife and I were going along with our first pregnancy with anticipation and excitement when we found out our child had Down Syndrome. As can be expected we went through a range of emotions as we processed and came to grips with this news. One of the strongest feelings was the fear of the unknown. The world of special needs can be quite a daunting system to navigate in addition to simply caring for a child's daily needs.

The information and resources that Support for Families provides has been invaluable. We have attended support groups and numerous trainings that have helped us find many of the resources that we have come to rely on in supporting our daughter.

We are consistently comforted by meeting people who are going through similar struggles and can relate to our family. Besides the resources and education provided, we have always been impressed with how Support for Families builds community and awareness.

*- Chris and Andrea Dehner
Darcy, Finley and Brendan*

Support for Families has made a difference. Thanks to your information, I have improved my knowledge about my child's disability. I have also been supported in difficult times.

*-Maria de Lourdes Sanchez
-& Pedro Martinez Lopez*



Jessica Hobbs