



Connections

Information + Support

Families of Children with Special Needs
Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, & Yancey counties

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FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK™ - HIGH COUNTRY

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An Affiliate of
Family Support Network™
North Carolina

With Support From

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Network™—High County
Avery Partnership for Children
Mitchell-Yancey Partnership for
Children
Yancey United Fund

Never Give Up!!

Zach was diagnosed with autism with mild mental retardation back in 1989. He was 3 at the time we received our news. There was little known about autism or how to treat it. Our journey started with Zach at the age of 1. I knew something was wrong but all the doctors did tell me that he was a boy and that boys really do develop later. But I knew they were wrong. Day after day we watched him gesture at objects with sounds of no meaning. And yes, we went through the lining up of objects that you knew never to touch. Head banging and rocking became his favorite hobbies. Fans were also special to him. Magnetic letters became his favorite at age 4. He started spelling words that he would see at the stores. For example: poultry, meats, and frozen foods. It was a little strange watching this all take place. We had no clue what to do or how to help him. My mother seen an ad in the local newspaper about testing your child at our local school if you felt they were developing slower than usual. I made the call immediately. But I also gave them warning that Zach might not be able to go through the testing. I was right. He couldn't be tested in any area. He ran around the room and ignored everyone. **That was my Zach...** The speech pathologist, Paula Joines, took special interest in him and became my families' closest friend. She visited us at home and brought information to us about the word autism. This was the first time I had ever heard this word. Soon Zach was to be tested at TEACCH in Greensboro, NC. However, we were on a very long waiting list. On the day of the diagnosis my heart was shattered into a million pieces. But after many days of thinking about myself and why me Lord, I decided that it was time to focus on the special little boy that God had picked for our family.



After 15 IEP's and countless meetings, I can tell you nothing stays the same. Today, Zach is 26 and the most incredible person you could ever hope to meet. His heart is filled with peace, joy, and love. The most admirable quality of Zach is that he doesn't get mad. He doesn't hold grudges. And he never says or does anything to hurt anyone. Today, I find myself as his mother desiring to be just like him. Our journey has been long and sometimes hard, but please remember everything changes. So **don't give up** on your special child. We found the master key is prayer and great love. Love changes things. When you feel accepted doesn't it make you feel like trying harder? At age 21 Zach completed his school time. I transitioned him out within a few months. I worked with Zach and made sure he was ready for the next phase in his life. Now what? Well, I went to school and worked as a Teacher Assistant with exceptional children 3 years before Zach was finished. I wanted some training from the teacher's. There is no better training than hands on. It was so amazing. The teacher's taught me how to continue Zach's school at home which he does today. Every day he does math and reading so he won't lose the knowledge he has acquired. I also started Zach a printing business tailored around his needs. He doesn't like to get his hands dirty. I purchased him a printer before I left the school. I then spent one year at home with him to start his business...FOR-ZAC PRINTING. It works. He can fold, label, count, staple, cut, and even package. The job he is does is always perfect. Zach also is the illustrator in 2 books. The superintendent, Mrs. Suzanne M. Irwin, who was at the school while Zach was traveling through, asks him to draw the pictures in her books. They are spectacular. You can see the books at stratfordoakstales.com and also a video about how the books were started. Zach also travels with his brother, Cody, to places singing. I hope that you can see why I, as Zach's mother, can tell you to **never give up**. Your journey will be different than ours but you can use your journey to help others also. I feel so blessed that God chose my family for Zach. Through Zach's eyes the world may look different but he now is in my world. We talk, we laugh, and we live a great life. I will continue to help Zach grow and meet new milestones in his life every day. His next goal is to live in an apartment beside my home. We are trying to find ways to make this happen for him. There are no limits with autism. I don't see autism I see Zach. Is autism there...yes, but I can't see it for all the love that flows from Zach's eyes. You see I accept Zach. And he is a winner with this Mom.

Love,

Donna Hamm
Zach's Mom

CONNECTIONS

More Resources:

IEP Team Process Videos are offered by the ECAC (Exceptional Children's Assistance Center). These short videos will give you information about IDEA, the IEP Team and will let you see what goes on in an IEP meeting. To view, go to ECAC IEP's website at www.ecac-parentcenter.org, scroll down and click on Media Center located on the left, and finally click on The IEP Team Process Videos link.

Parenting Special Needs is a FREE magazine offered at www.parentingspecialneeds.org. All you have to do is subscribe and you will receive the magazine that contains true stories and have fun activities you can do with your children. You can also submit your own stories into this magazine! Just click submit on the website and they will give you details about how to submit it.

Love and Logic Helpful hint....

Giving Choices:

- ◆ For each choice, give two options - each of which you like!
 - ◆ Only give choices that fit your value system.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to say, "I usually give choices, but not this time."
- ◆ If your child does not choose within 10 seconds, choose for him or her.
 - ◆ Give choices before the child becomes resistant.

Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients:

1 large egg
1 cup crunchy, salted peanut butter
1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/3 cup chocolate chips



Directions

1. In a bowl, combine egg, sugar, and vanilla extract. Add in peanut butter and chocolate chips and stir together.
2. Scoop out about a teaspoon of dough and roll into a ball. Place on greased baking sheet and flatten carefully with a fork
3. Bake at 350°F for 12 to 16 minutes.
4. Let sit for a couple minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack