



A LETTER FROM YOUR NEW PRESIDENT



Dear SWASA members:

Last newsletter, I promised to share what SWASA has done for my family.

INFORMATION-- Sheri and I had limited experience with autistic children at our fingertips. We had to plow through hundreds of articles with conflicting information --FORGET IT! But to come to a meeting, to hear one parent say yeah, the gluten free diet worked well, or mega vitamins worked well, or Prozac worked well, or ABA worked well-- that is helpful

ADVOCACY-- this organization should be looking out for you. We have been a voice in publicizing the needs of autistic children and trying to express our demands for the educational system to be more accommodating. I think we might have made an impact in helping our kids to have more stable bus drivers. The big meetings we had within the past 2 years were helpful in education the educators and general public.

SUPPORT-- Hey, I'm not the only one with problems! In my family, with increasing demands on our time, we tended to socialize less, and we felt cut off from others in the community. I knew that was something we had to fight. For Mickey's birthday we invited a few families we knew from SWASA. Many people from here have extended families that provide a break and an ear to listen. But not everyone. And is that enough? We haven't always attended every meeting, in fact I have only attended maybe 3/4's of the meetings since we started coming 2 years ago, but what Sheri and I take away from SWASA is meeting and getting to know other families who are also in pain, who are struggling with the same feelings. And it is nice to know that we are not the only family having some hard times.

Some of the most well-liked activities were those when the whole family could participate in the event--like last year at the Poki Roni Ranch. It was a chance for families with autistic children to get together with other families in a social environment. Families didn't have to worry about how their children behaved, and we all looked out for each others children.

Aren't we all trying to find a place where we belong? Like the TV show "Cheers", aren't we trying to find a place where every body knows our name? We need to create a community in El Paso where we feel appreciated, really appreciated for all that we do for our children--to know that just the complicated task of parenting is twice as hard for us. We can complain about lives here, and know we will be understood and receive sympathy, advice, hope and warmth and friendship of others.

When I was asked to take this position, I immediately thought, oh no, how could I fit something else into my schedule? I'm hoping that my role of president won't make too many demands on my time, but I'm mainly doing it because I appreciate what SWASA has done. I recently learned what FUBU means on all those t-shirts--anyone know? It means: for you, and by you. I don't think we should make SWASA FUBU shirts, but in my opinion, SWASA should first of be a place where families come to charge their batteries, feel the warmth of meeting their friends who are in the same community, and are working together to make their families and the larger community a little less challenging and more accepting of our children. Work with me, lets have some good times together.

Your SWASA President,
Dr. Karl Zeff

CONTRIBUTE YOUR STORIES TO THE SWASA NEWSLETTER

Send information about your child's personal gains and history. We are interested in highlighting your family experiences. Contact our office.

