



**Connecting Hearts
and
Raising Voices**

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

The past year has been busy and rewarding for the staff and Board of Family Voices of Minnesota. Family Voices of Minnesota's staff include regional and multi-cultural Parent Support Navigators located in the Rochester, Hutchinson, Duluth, Bemidji areas and the Twin Cities.

We have been studying the impact of our Parent to Parent Program and parents have reported the following important outcomes:

- Increased confidence caring for their child
- Increased confidence navigating systems and accessing community resources
- Decreased emergency department visits
- 97% of families would recommend Family Voices to another family

In the next year we will see some of our current grant funding end, so sustaining our Parent to Program is our most important goal and biggest need for 2017.

Your support is an essential and important way for us to continue to provide the unique support and assistance that families in Minnesota need that are not provided by traditional systems or any other organization.



Together we are able to make a difference in the lives of families whose children have unique and complex needs.

Thank you for your support.

Carolyn Allshouse

Who are Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs?



This can include children with Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Autism, Down Syndrome, Learning Disabilities, food allergies and other conditions that require the child and family to use services and systems beyond what children typically require.

- There are about 179,000 children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities in Minnesota
- 1 in 5 Minnesota families with children have at least one child with special health care needs

Visit our website:

www.familyvoicesmn.org to learn more.



Why Parent to Parent is so Important

When you are a parent whose child has unique needs your life is complicated and different from other families you know.

All parents want to feel they belong and are connected to other families.

Parent to Parent connects families whose children have unique needs with one another so they do not feel alone.



This type of connection and support is not something professionals can provide.

Parent to Parent Provides Resources

Parent to Parent Support is also about giving families the resources they need.

Most of the time parents don't know what to ask for. Sometimes professionals don't offer anything unless they are specifically asked.



Sandy Hruby

What Being a Support Parent Means to Me

Being able to support another parent is a gift to me. I am able to lend an ear to someone who feels they have no one to talk to. To laugh, cry and talk with them brings me back to how isolated I felt at first and how appreciative I was when I found someone who understood what I was going through.



Being a Support Parent allows me to watch that other parent grow, watch them become more confident, watch them feel better about themselves. Helping others gives back as much to me as it gives to them.

Jodi Furman

Comments from a Parent Who Received Support

"I hope that other parents tell you often how great you are at what you do. I was so emotionally upset about what was going on with my child and then you came in and validated my frustration but also gave me good advice!"



We provide unique support not available anywhere else

The Family Voices of Minnesota Parent to Parent program involves providing support so parents do not feel alone in their journey; informing families about community resources and how to use them; empowering and preparing families to partner with their child's providers and promoting patient and family-centered care.



Family Voices of Minnesota's Vision and Mission

Vision: Strong connected families who are empowered advocates to ensure the best health care for children and youth with special healthcare needs.

Mission: To cultivate strong families across Minnesota by connecting them with one another for support and information so they become empowered advocates improving health and quality of life for children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities.



Parent to Parent Made a Difference in My Life

After my family moved to MN from Colorado, we knew that we needed to be connected with services for our son who is 4 and has epilepsy, developmental delays, and cortical visual impairment. We learned that we did not have adequate insurance coverage to provide therapies and medical equipment to help my son.

When I called Family Voices Parent to Parent program I got connected to a support parent who gave me resources that helped me find a primary care doctor, understand how to obtain referrals for therapy, and ways to work with the school supports to connect services in our home.

After connecting with another parent, I felt more confident approaching my son's neurologist with questions, which can be very intimidating.



Having a child with complex needs is difficult and scary at times...being able to share stories and exchange information with other parents is very much needed. Only other parents of kids with special needs truly understand the struggles and triumphs.

Being a Parent Support Navigator

Our son was born extremely premature in 2012. He was discharged from the hospital after what felt like a never ending roller-coaster ride in the NICU. I remember bringing him home and thinking, "now what?" Being a new mom is overwhelming enough, and when you add in monitors, medications, respiratory and feeding concerns in addition to a lengthy list of follow up appointments with specialists, it was absolutely terrifying.

We live in rural Minnesota and we had no idea how to go about finding resources and accessing the care that our child required. I spent hours searching for information and joined several support groups on social media, but was never really able to find information specific to our area.

I started working with Family Voices of Minnesota last year, and I can honestly say that I really love my job. I enjoy working with other parents as they face the challenges of accessing services and navigating healthcare systems in rural Minnesota.



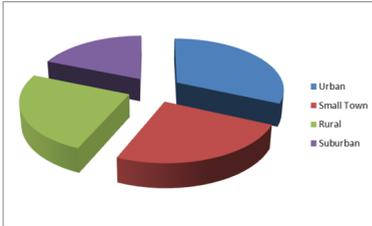
This position has allowed me the chance to decrease the stress and fear of other parents by sharing my personal knowledge and experience I have gained throughout our journey.

Jess Randall

Family Voices by the Numbers



Individual assistance and parent to parent support provided to over 937 families



The families we serve live in urban, rural, small towns and suburban communities

- 60% of families we serve are considered low income
- 76% of the children have multiple diagnoses



Outreach to 105,589 families and professionals



139 Volunteers



1,400 educational materials disseminated to families and professional

Financials

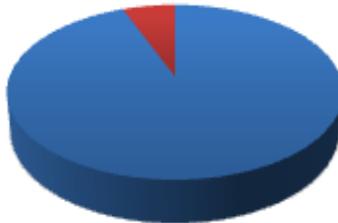
October 2015 Through September 2016

Total Income: 175,774



- Parent to Parent Related Grants
- Other Parent Related Grants
- Fundraising

Total Expenses: 167,054



- Parent to Parent Program Related
- General

Donor Spotlight: Michelle and Steve Anderson

It was sixteen years ago that our first child Noah was born with Spina Bifida. At the time, both my husband and I did not know anything about this condition and what life for our son would be like.



Noah's first years of life were spent mostly in the hospital as we tried to stabilize his complicated body. We were very worried and stressed out most of the time. We felt very

alone, as we knew of no one that had, or was walking in our shoes. We had asked the specialty doctors if they could share the name of a family in a similar situation but back then they did not keep a database of names of these special children.

In addition, back then there was not a program such as Family Voices and oh how I wish there had been! To have another parent that you could be honest and share your concerns and frustrations with would have been such a blessing to us. To know that another parent really understood how hard and challenging life with a special child can be. And to lift you up along the way without judgment but encouragement and to light the way would be an amazing gift.

That is why we choose to support Family Voices every year in the hopes that other families may receive this unique gift of Parent to Parent Support that no medical staff can provide. When we meet other families with a child with unique needs there is an immediate bond and unspoken understanding that we know their life is complicated but filled with a special unconditional love that these children exude.



Being a Volunteer Support Parent

Not only does supporting other parents give you a sense of belonging, but it also gives you a sense of hope, a sense of community, and a sense of understanding.

It gives you a purpose that maybe you're put into this position as a parent of a child with a disability for a reason... knowing that you can affect other people's lives and make things better or easier for them.



**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE WORK OF
FAMILY VOICES OF MINNESOTA THROUGH YOUR
GENEROUS DONATIONS ***

OVER \$1,500

Individual Donors

Ed and Ceci Shapland
Susan Wingert & Jan Mattson
David Griffin & Margie Hogan
Steve & Michelle Anderson

Business Donors

Pediatric Home Services
Gillette Children's Specialty
Healthcare
Delta Dental

\$500-\$999

Individual Donors

Alfred and Nanette Beltran
Bill Amberg
Jane Hogan and Paul Johnson
Judy Brisbane
Sarah Kiesling
Terry and Carol Kapsen
Tricia Brisbane and Andy Phillips

Business Donors

Elite Transportation Systems
Minnesota Wild
Southwest Airlines
Disney Theme Parks

\$200-\$499

Individual Donors

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\$100-\$199

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Business Donors

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Timberwolves

\$50-\$99

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Minnesota Twins
Ordway
Ottorbox
Science Museum of Minnesota
StandUp Paddle Boarding
Surley Brewing

Thank You From a Parent Who Received Parent to Parent Support

*The support I received
from Parent to Parent was
amazing! I was connected
to a Volunteer Support
Parent named Leslie who
was a huge help to me and
my son; she connected me
to other resources that
were also very helpful.*

*I'm sure we will have
other challenges, but for
now I will celebrate the
accomplishments that
Leslie helped make
possible.*

Penny

*October 1, 2015 to
September 31, 2016



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**Visit our website to learn more about our
programs and services:
www.familyvoicesmn.org**

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Family Voices of Minnesota became a non-profit 501c3 organization in 2009 and is the State Affiliate Organization for: National Family Voices and Parent to Parent USA.