

# Project Proud Families tackles 'special needs'

by Holly Rickman

Project Proud Families hopes to make changes in our thinking about special needs. We are a Christian non-profit that supports families of any religious background that have a child with a special need. We do this in many ways. First, by offering support groups every third Thursday at 225 Still Waters Dr., Siler City. Secondly, we plan and offer fun family support activities. Lastly, our website is available to all ([www.projectproud.org](http://www.projectproud.org)). There we have a free medical advice in the form of Ask the Pharmacist and Ask the Pediatric Nurse for those parents with a child with a special need that register on our site.

Basically, we provide all the services that I had wanted when I was going through our struggle to diagnose our 1-year-old daughter. I vowed that I would do whatever it takes so that other families would not have to feel the isolation and at times despair

we felt (see Sophie's story on our site). There is often a lack of knowledge on how to support struggling parents, so friends and family members may drift off. Or they may enable the denial you have over the news or suspicions that your child has autism, ADHD, juvenile diabetes, etc. Or, in our case, Infantile spasms and Optic Nerve Hypoplasia. We hope to help others see the blessing amidst the grief.

We also hope to educate the community as to exactly what are "special needs." There is a common misconception that that term is reserved for children with a syndrome or those confined to a wheelchair. In fact, that term applies to most of us! The definition as per *Merriam Webster* is "the individual requirements (per education) of a person with a disadvantaged background or a mental, emotional, or physical ability, or a high risk of developing one." Think about this, that includes every diagnosis

from arthritis to obesity to depression. We are looking to dispel the stigma around the words "special need" since it encompasses most of us. We are all on different points of the same continuum. So our educational initiative (launching in the fall) is called "From Glasses to Wheelchairs."

This will also help people understand and have a dialogue with others who may have medical diagnoses we do not understand. We want to give others confidence as to what to say in those situations and others. All in all, we just need to accept each other for who and what we are and treat each other as equals.

For more info or if you would like to schedule our team to come out and educate your school, church, etc., please feel free to email me ([holly@projectproud.org](mailto:holly@projectproud.org)). I look forward to creating change together.

*Holly Rickman is a founder of Project Proud Families.*

## INSURERS

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Right wing defenders of the status quo and their Republican acolytes have resorted to lying and dissembling to thwart health care reform; the same technique they used to sell the War in the Iraq. Then it was Saddam's imaginary weapons of mass destruction and make believe meetings between Saddam's intelligence agents and 9/11 planners. Now it is lies about death panels persuading seniors to have themselves euthanized, from former VP candidate Sarah Palin and Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley no less.

Angry protesters at town hall meetings demand that the government keep its hands off Medicare, oblivious to the fact that not only is Medicare a government program, but the Republicans fought tooth and nail 45 years ago to try to stop its passage.

Medicare passed, of course, because then President Lyndon Johnson was a master politician and rammed it down the Republican's throats. Obama and the Democrats will probably need to do that too. In order to be successful, they going to have to simplify health care reform from a thousand pages down to one or two: All consideration of preconditions is outlawed, coverage can't be cut and rates can't be raised due to illness, there can be no caps on lifetime benefits, and mental illness needs to be covered the same way as any other illness. That simple.

They are also going to have to get it right. When the Democratic Congress did nothing about health reform in the early Clinton years, in 1994 they were swept from power for the next 12 years. If they pass reform and it doesn't work, they will be swept from power as the Republicans were, in 2006 over the bungling of the Iraq War and in 2008 over the Great Recession.

Ironically, opponents of the Obama plan have some excellent points to make about health care reform, though they are hard to hear above of all the lies and shouting. One is that malpractice tort reform is also needed. Doctors need to stop having to order batteries of expensive tests to protect themselves against lawsuits, and patients who

have suffered because of incompetent care need to be compensated with money pooled for this purpose rather than the lottery of a malpractice suit. The other is that businesses should no longer be responsible for health insurance coverage of its employees. This would contribute greatly to business profitability and liberate employees who may stay at a hated job for the health insurance benefits.

Without these two things, medical costs will continue to skyrocket, health insurance reform notwithstanding.

But the key to it all is making health insurance companies do the right thing. And when they don't, they need to be kicked to the curb. That is a good starting point.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.*

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