

86 HB 228 approved, Success in Business, Prayers and more

Dearest Advocates:

Thanks to everyone that listened this last Saturday, April 4, 2009 at 9:00am on Radio AM 790 The Zone regarding the "Top Ten Things - Families should know that have a Child with Special Needs". As soon as the entire broadcast is available, I will let you know via the web. It was very exciting to have an entire show dedicated on what families need to know when you have a child with a disability! This was a wonderful opportunity to continue to help educate society on the things we have to know about and manage as families. I realize we were not able to get through all the topics but it was a start!

As many of you are aware, the legislative session was completed for another year. I have not gotten a summary of everything disability related but I do know that House Bill 228 did pass. This allowed for restructuring of agencies and the development of a new Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DD) reporting directly to the Governor. Due to all of our advocacy efforts DD was included in the naming of the new dept that will service children and adults with disabilities. Thank you for all your hard advocacy work. See below for more information. As I receive more information and summaries of the final impacts on the legislative session on our families, I will forward to you as well.

In US News this week, there was an amazing story about a young man who is running his own business (who happens to have Down syndrome and Autism). What a success story! I could only hope and pray someday our children are allowed the same opportunity in the community to show they can be productive members of society (given the right resources and love). See below this amazing story-

In addition, if you could please pray for 5 ½ year old Pierce Ruck. I just was informed today that his cancer is back and he will have to undergo a bone marrow transplant in the coming months. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Pierce and his family. I know many of you know his family. If you would like to get in touch with them, they can be reached at elenaandbill@yahoo.com.

As you are aware, this week is Spring Break for many families (including ours). I will not have access to email till next week so if you send me an email, please understand if I don't respond back until next week. We ALL need a break!

"UNITED – WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!"

Sincerely,

Heidi

(Proud Mother to Jacob - 9 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)

"Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!"

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Governor Praises Passage of Legislation to Restructure the Department of Human Resources

Location: HB 228 - State health and human services agencies; reorganize and reestablish; provision

ATLANTA, Governor Sonny Perdue commended today the final passage of House Bill 228 by the General Assembly. This legislation will reorganize the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Department of Community Health, creating a new Department of Behavioral Health. The legislation was introduced in House by Rep. Mark Butler and carried in the Senate by Sen. Renee Unterman.

House Bill 228 provides vital restructuring to agencies that care for our state's most vulnerable citizens, said Governor Perdue. I am confident this restructuring puts in place a framework for a more efficient, effective delivery of these critical services.

The bill will result in three agencies reorganized to provide more focused results, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Community Health and the Department of Human Services. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be responsible for all mental health, developmental disability and addictive disease programs currently under DHR. The department will report directly to the Governor, increasing transparency.

The Department of Community Health will be reorganized to include all the public health and health and long-term care regulation programs of DHR. This change establishes one lead agency to focus on improving Georgia's health and streamlines health related activities currently in two separate departments.

Lastly, remaining services will be housed under the Department of Human Services. Programs included in this department include Aging, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and Child Support.

The bill largely resembles the recommendations made by the Health and Human Services Task Force, which convened last year and studied these issues at length. Sen. Renee Unterman, Sen. Jack Hill, Rep. Ben Harbin and Rep. Mark Butler all served on the Health and Human Services Task Force.

With the passage of this legislation, we are transforming Georgia's mental and public health systems, said Rep. Butler. Georgians who might be lost in a larger organization will get the help and attention they need and deserve.

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How One Autistic Young Man Runs a Business

"Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn" *US News* By Nancy Shute – Fri Apr 3

Joe Steffy is off to Overland Park, Kan., this week to do a PowerPoint presentation on his business, [Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn](#). He's a 23-year-old small-business man with a goal of \$100,000 in sales by 2012. Joe also has autism and Down syndrome and is nonverbal. When he gives his talk, he will push buttons on an augmentative speech device to deliver the words. His audience will be parents who fervently hope their own special-needs children will be able to work, too.

Joe's parents, Ray and Janet, of Louisburg, Kan., didn't agree with the assessment of the school district in which they lived previously, which had said Joe would never be able to work or live independently. "I'm one who can easily get ticked off," says Ray. "That ticked me off. We saw more in Joe than that. We set out to prove to the school that he had capabilities." They came across kettle corn while on a trip to Alaska and realized that all that popping, scooping, and serving suited Joe's love of work.

The path to Joe Steffy's success was not an easy one; Ray Steffy worked closely with [Dave Hammis](#), an advocate for self-employment for people with disabilities in Middletown, Ohio, who trains business owners, government employees, and parents on how to make use of state and federal programs. The Steffys wrote up a business plan and helped Joe secure \$25,000 in grants from programs like Social Security Administration's [Plan to Achieve Self-Support program \(PASS\)](#).

In 2005, Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn was born. Sales have grown from \$16,000 in 2005 to \$50,000 in 2008, both from selling at festivals and from delivering popcorn to local outlets. Joe has five part-time employees, and his parents help out with driving and other tasks. "Pop and everyone that works with him knows whatever Joe wants to do you let him do, because he's the boss," Ray says. "If he wants to pop, he'll shove Dad out of the way and pop."

If the business stays on track, it should be grossing more than \$100,000 in three years, and the Steffys are seeking a business partner who can work with Joe to manage the business. Joe is no longer on Social Security disability payments; instead, he pays state sales tax and state and federal income tax. He rents his own house and is helped by caregivers who are paid by a state program.

"It's been hard work, from the standpoint of physical work," says Ray Steffy, who is 67. "But a parent with a child like Joe has a choice. You can either kick in and do this kind of thing, or you can sit and fret emotionally with the amount of energy, worrying about what's going to happen to them."

The payoff for that effort, as far as the Steffys are concerned, has been priceless. They see their son make a local popcorn delivery, accept payment, fold it, and put it in his pocket. When he walks out, his dad says, Joe looks 3 inches taller than when he walked in.

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