

## What Have I Learned?

It has not been an easy journey by any means, and while things have gotten easier with time, there are seven things that I can say for sure: (1) There is real power in prayer and total faith in God; (2) We must always start with the end in mind, constantly daring to dream; (3) The "road traveled" constantly changes so adjustments will always be necessary; (4) A positive frame of mind is key and a good support group can help maintain that balance; (5) Autism is a developmental disability—it is not an illness; (6) Autism is a label to be used to secure services—Autism is NOT our children; and (7) Our children are children first, and are living with Autism second, so, being a parent to the child and not the disability is key to their success.

So, who am I? I am a humble mom that truly believes God has blessed me through my children, and has set me on a mission to give all children with disabilities a voice by helping their parents realize the blessings in them."

**Sylvia James-Miller**



**Parents Helping Parents  
of Florida, Inc.**

*(Providing Support and a "Fountain" of Information  
for Parents and Siblings of Children with Disabilities)*

**Encouraging** Parent Involvement  
by  
**Raising** Parent Awareness

## "Keeping It Simple"



A series of motivational trainings from one parent to another.



"When the only tool you have is a hammer, every-thing looks like a nail."

— Turkish Proverb

**Parents Helping Parents of Florida, Inc.** gives you more than one tool.

Parent Support Group, Training, Conferences, Literature, Reference Material, Direction to Major Resource Organizations and



Parents Helping Parents of Florida, Inc. (PHPF)

P.O. Box 830802  
Ocala, FL 34483-0802

Phone/Fax: 352-624-1360

Mobile: 352-843-3202

E-mail: [smiller@phpf-fountain.org](mailto:smiller@phpf-fountain.org)

Website: <http://phpf-fountain.org>

## Who Am I? ...

I am not an expert, nor am I a professional. I am simply a mom who adores her children, two of whom are living with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This "autism thing" continues to be a journey for me — one on which I have learned many things from my sons (who I study constantly), from my daughter (who handles them as nothing more than "brothers"), and of course from very dedicated specialists, educators and parents who continue to try out old methods, work out the kinks, and come up with new and improved approaches to communication and learning.

Sylvia James-Miller is a single parent of three teenagers, two of whom are living with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She became Founder and Executive Director of Parents Helping Parents of Florida in 2001, creating the PHPF website and newsletter. She has been a Marion County Parent Partner with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Florida, Gainesville since August, 2003, working with families of children with ASD in Marion and surrounding areas. With a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Arts, her area of focus has become the use of visual strategies and assistive technology as communicative aides in relation to independent functioning for children living with ASD, and her home has become a model for parents, educators and service providers. She is a 2002 graduate of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council Partners in Policymaking Program, and a Certified Behavior Assistant. As a member of the Marion County Children's Alliance and Co-Chair of the Autism and Other Disabilities Workgroup she coordinated the first "Pilot Kids" Summer Program (a fully inclusive program placing children with disabilities in day camps with their non-disabled peers). She works closely with Marion County Public School System providing parent training, and as a member of the Marion Area Transition Team collaborates with other agencies to better prepare students' post-educational success. She devotes the remainder of her time to raising awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder through special

**"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." Helen Keller**

## Presentations

### **"A Dream Reborn"**

**A Guide to the Stages of Grief for Families of Children Living with Disabilities**

"...Six weeks after my return to New York City, I lost my oldest daughter to an untimely and tragic death, and at the same time, my youngest son, just two years old, was diagnosed with Autism...."

A positive spin on coping with "loss".

### **"My Very Own Tool Supply" Visual Supports in Real Life**

"The real work and my sons' journey to success began on September 16, 2004, when I became a single parent and took charge of my life and theirs. There were no miracle cures to make them well. (They were not sick.) I couldn't expect teachers to do a "quick fix" and send them home. (They are too complex for that.) I couldn't do it all alone. The sound of my voice and the perfected "mommy stare" were not enough. I needed a way to enhance their education at home...it was a matter of sink or swim."

The use of visual strategies to teach independent living skills.

### **"Disability Acceptance and the Role You Play"**

"There is a difference between a disability and a handicap. A disability is a condition that limits a person's ability to do something such as walk, talk or reason. A handicap is an imposed barrier that restricts a person. Society's lack of knowledge is a handicap to people with disabilities. Society frequently has mistaken beliefs about their abilities. I plan to change the attitudes that handicap people with disabilities. Disabilities aren't handicaps—negative attitudes are. I'm working to change that mindset. My life's mission not only consists of teaching my sons how to live in this world, but to change the attitude of their neighbors—if necessary, one person at a time."

An overview of disabilities and bullying prevention.

### **"From Caterpillar to Butterfly" A Visual Flutter Through Transition**

"Slowly but surely the size of my world has changed, from seclusion in my home—held prisoner by challenging behaviors and limitations on what my children seemed unable to do—to overnight stays in hotels on trips away from home alone with my sons, and future plans of travel to far

away places without them."

A unique transition plan from early childhood to adulthood from a mother's perspective.

**Presentations can be created to suit your audience, staff and specific program needs.**

**Session length: Four (4) hours  
Full day programs available upon request**

**Parents Helping Parents of Florida, Inc. provides:**

**On-site Instruction  
Training Outline  
Presentation Materials/Handouts  
Certificates of Completion**

**RATES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

Parents Helping Parents of Florida, Inc.

P.O. Box 830802

Ocala, FL 34483-0802

Phone/Fax: 352-624-1360

Mobile: 352-843-3202

E-mail: [smiller@phpf-fountain.org](mailto:smiller@phpf-fountain.org)