Dear Friends,

The past year has been busy and rewarding for the staff and Board of Family Voices of Minnesota.

We are so fortunate to have such a hard working and dedicated staff located in around the state in Mankato, Duluth, Wadena, St. Cloud and the Twin Cities.

We are introducing a new name for our parent to parent peer support program, CONNECTED! With the help of marketing expertise from Michelle Anderson we surveyed families and professionals around the state and found that the word CONNECTED really described parent to parent peer support. We now have a new brochure and a new web-site to help us reach families across Minnesota.

We have started some new training opportunities for families through monthly webinars on a variety of topics. We have a new partnership with the MN Department of Health through a three year grant we received September 1, 2017. We are excited about the establishment of our Cultural Advisory Committee.

Your support is an essential and important way for us to provide the unique support and assistance that families need. Together we are able to make a difference in the lives of families whose children have disabilities and special health care 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 CONNECTED Parent-to Parent Peer Support 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.

The CONNECTED program connects families whose children have unique needs with one another so they do not feel alone.

We have studied the impact of the CONNECTED 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
We Provide Unique Support Not Available Anywhere Else

The Family Voices of Minnesota Parent to Parent program is now call CONNECTED!

CONNECTED really describes parent to parent support. This connection provides support so families do not feel alone in their journey.

When a parent gets connected they receive:

- Connection with another parent who has a child with similar needs or experiences
- Information and assistance to help get needed services and supports including financial, healthcare, educational and community life
- Emotional support, understanding and acceptance so they do not feel alone
- Encouragement and education to empower the family to speak up for their child and get needed services.
What Being a CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parent Means to Me

I had been looking for a way to walk alongside other families whose children have special needs. I had realized that in my own journey it had been very lonely and I felt like I didn’t know what questions to ask or how to navigate the life I was thrown into.

I took the CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parent training course and felt like it was what I had been searching for; not only for me, but an opportunity to walk alongside other parents that needed someone that understood.

The most rewarding part I have found about being a CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parent is watching parents go from a place of despair or confusion to giving themselves the permission to become advocates for their kids and realize that they had these super powers of being a loving, educated & confident advocate for their child.
To see these parents grow and feel more confident about being a parent to a child with special needs is the most rewarding experience. We were never meant to walk this journey alone and I am just so thrilled I get to meet and/or talk to some of the most amazing people on earth and encourage them to realize their super powers.

I wish that more people knew about this program and the benefits of the CONNECTED Parent to Parent program. It is an amazing program that can help change kids and their parents lives by giving them resources & encouragement to continue this journey stronger than when they started it.

Sarah
CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parent
Family Voices by the Numbers

Provided support and information to families through over 1,100 individual family connections

Assistance and training to over 400 professionals

2,306 educational materials disseminated to families and professionals

157 Volunteers

Provided 71 trainings to families and professionals

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

The families we serve live in urban, rural, small towns and suburban communities
Financials
October 2016 Through September 2017

Total Income: 194,535

Total Expenses: 185,680
THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE WORK OF FAMILY VOICES OF MINNESOTA THROUGH YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS *

OVER $1,500
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Ed and Ceci Shapland
Susan Wingert & Jan Mattson
David Griffin & Margie Hogan
Steve & Michelle Anderson
Tricia Brisbine and Andy Phillips

Business Donors
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Cameo Zehnder
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Walter and Carol Griffin
Yvonne and Chuck Selcer
Terrance and Carol Kapsen
Dianne and Gary Goolsbee
Michael and Leslie Neeser

- August 2016 thru September 2017

Thank you for being our super heroes!
THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE WORK OF FAMILY VOICES OF MINNESOTA THROUGH YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS *

$50-$99
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Meg and Jason Shelfer
Sandy Stebbing
Jim and Lisa Steffen
Mateo, Angela, and Mark Stenberg
Sandra Wheelcor
Michelle Wood
Lowell and Jan Zeller

* August 2016 thru September 2017
Tamara was referred to the CONNECTED program by staff at her son's clinic. She wanted to connect with another parent who understood the difficulties of a diagnosis of autism. She also wanted to learn about self care and ways to ease the financial burden that her son's therapies had created for their family.

Tamara was connected with one of the CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parents for peer support and information.

Over the course of two months, they connected several times. Tamara received on-going emotional support from the CONNECTED Volunteer Support Parent who had experienced similar situations with her own child.

When we followed up with Tamara to see how things were going she described this connection as "incredible." She felt that her confidence increased and that she had found a voice to better advocate for her child.
It is impossible to adequately express my gratitude for Family Voices as our family faced a challenging diagnosis and uncertain treatment plan this summer.

From the initial contact, I felt supported and understood. Talking to parents who traveled the path we are only just embarking on has been and continues to be an immense comfort. These caring parents have also provided advice on preparing for what lies ahead in ways we would never have otherwise known. Thank you so much!"

Brenda, St. Paul, MN
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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.