

We are Waiting!



Eleven-year old twins, Samantha and Danielle, were diagnosed with Autism right after their third birthday. Their birth and early years were marked with many trying times: temper tantrums, inability to communicate (talk and understand) and inability to play. They were over 4 years old before they began having a full night's sleep. We applied for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver Waiting List in 2003.

As a nurse I earn a decent salary and my ex-husband also has a good job so my children have private insurance. Despite this, having four kids, two with developmental disabilities, has caused some financial struggles but we try the best for our children.

Samantha and Danielle love animals! Horses, dogs – they really light up their lives – and through animals, the twins are learning to communicate. Samantha learned to speak through commands to a therapy dog made possible through Assistance Dogs of the West. A simple command of 'Sit' led to a breakthrough in speech. We're thrilled! But the cost of therapeutic horse riding, speech therapy and purchasing our own therapy dog Lexi is expensive. First is the \$400 private insurance deductible. Two months of therapeutic horse riding was \$800/month so I had to make the painful and probably wrong decision, not to pursue this. Private Speech Therapy in Las Cruces through NMSU is about \$500/month. Just seeing the profound improvement is worth the financial sacrifice and we are blessed that some grant funds were available for the Speech Therapy because we simply could not afford to make all these trips.

Samantha and Danielle are in the Fourth Grade at the Cobre School District. Thanks to the educators and school therapists, the girls continue to improve. Samantha passed the 3rd grant NM Standards Based Assessment tests in reading and math. Danielle is talking in abrupt sentences, and while not doing well academically, has an affinity for computers and anything electronic – great learning tools.

It's been 8 years on the DDS Waiver Waiting List. We are still waiting for help to continue these promising therapies. Although local charitable organizations in our community like the Moose Club, our school, and the small grant funds we have received have led to remarkable changes in the twins' lives, I worry about the future. Will we still be waiting when the girls hit their teens and their needs change? Will I still be their primary caregiver as they reach young adulthood? What happens when they leave the school system and the critical services are not there? I pray for those families that cannot afford to pay for therapies and wait for services – and wait for the skills their children with disabilities so critically need – and deserve - to function, learn and grow.

Our children are our most important resource. If we can give our children the treatment and help they need when they are young, they can reach their highest potential. If not, these children will become adults that require more intense (and expensive) interventions.

Please support funds for Developmental Disabilities Services and end the wait for thousands of children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in New Mexico.

Waiting List Campaign:

**The Arc of New Mexico*Disability Rights New Mexico*PRO
NM Developmental Disabilities Planning Council**