

January, 1999

Jeremy and Don

Today my son Jeremy is two years older and happier than he's been in a long time.

Previous experience with counseling, human services and professionals often brought disappointment, lack of follow through, suspicion and lots of clipboards. When I was introduced to the Integrated Services Project in Waushara County I was quite skeptical. The first contact with the Project Coordinator brought someone to my house who was quite direct - made no unrealistic promises, but indicated there was help for a child with special needs and help for the family. We found out that we were not alone. We were given information and allowed to choose if we wanted to participate.

The paperwork was different from the "old way." Something was being done with the information provided - we were being listened to. I was actively involved. The process happened in my house. I had a say in who was on the team. From the first meeting there was an overwhelming sense of support. We no longer had a feeling of being alone.

A workable plan was developed with all the team members taking responsibility, but the sense of ownership rested with the family. When the inevitable crisis occurred, the wheels of support turned and my son and I got the help needed - before, during and the after the crisis. Even on occasion when things didn't work as originally planned, good outcomes still happened. The school representative was a special person during this time.

Two years later we have gained a lot of knowledge about ourselves, disabilities, and the care and concern of community resources that were needed and how to access them. There continues to be a sense of support from all directions. Today my son has helped start an active support group at school entitled "Positive Living Group." He is doing well at home and at school and is involved in extracurricular activities and most importantly has a positive attitude about life.

I have grown in the process myself and am an active parent member of the county Coordinating Committee and am becoming certified as a parent advocate through Wisconsin Family Ties to support other parents going through the process. Although we are no longer actively enrolled, I am now seeing my "friends" from the team in the community. Christmas Day my son's therapist took me out to lunch - we had a nice visit.

Don